

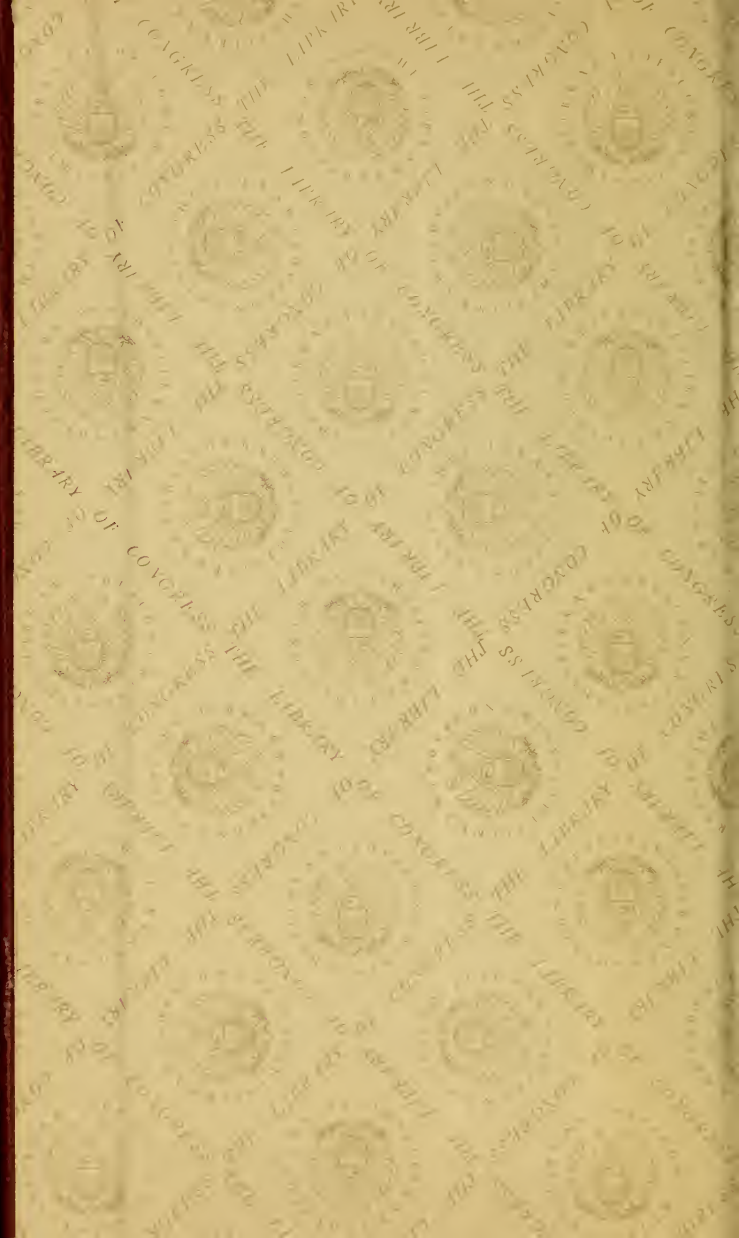
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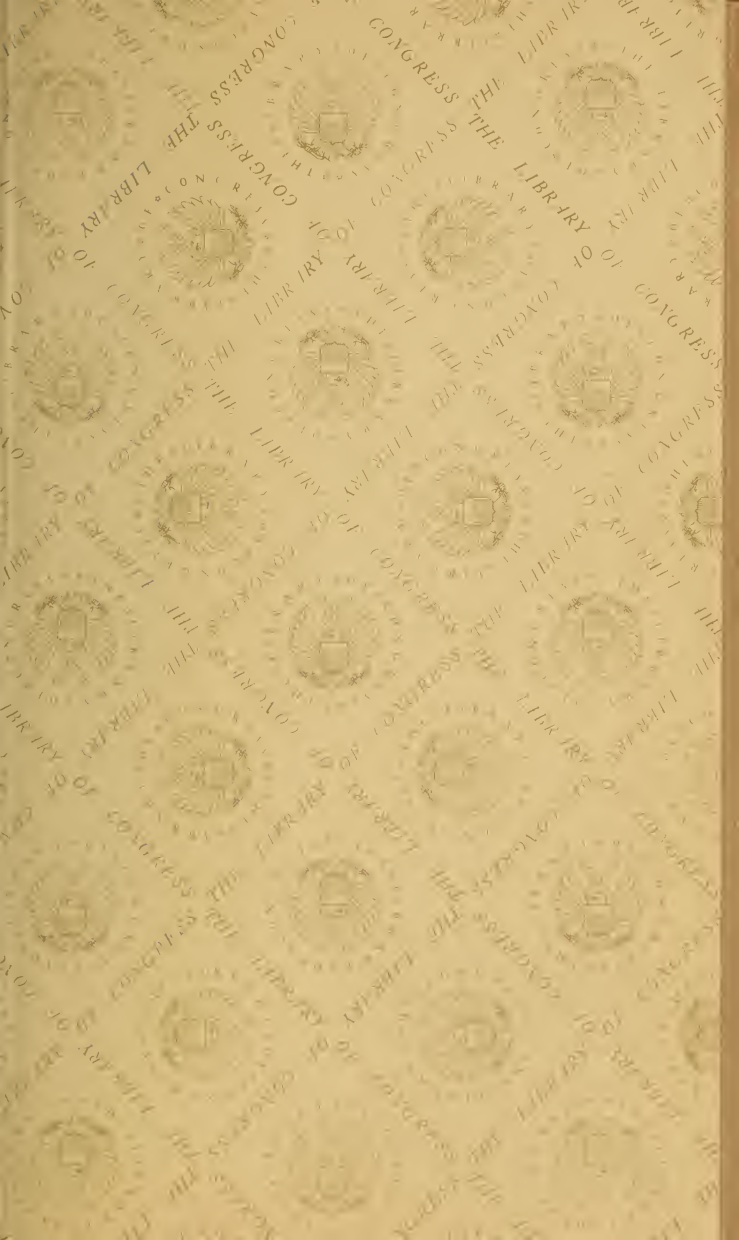
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AN
INTRODUCTION
TO
CHRISTIANITY:

DESIGNED TO PRESERVE

YOUNG PEOPLE

FROM

IRRELIGION AND VICE.

BY JOSEPH SUTCLIFFE.

I write unto thee, most excellent Theophilus, that thou mightest know the certainty of those things wherein thou hast been instructed: which things the angels desire to look into.

LUKE i. 4.—1 PET. i. 12.

Que ceux qui combattent la religion, apprennent au moins qu'elle est avant que de la combattre.—PASCAL.

Second American, from the second (improved) English edition.

NEW-YORK:

PUBLISHED BY J. SOULE AND T. MASON, FOR THE METHODIST
EPISCOPAL CHURCH IN THE UNITED STATES.

J. C. Totten, printer.

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TO

ROBERT CARR BRACKENBURY, ESQ.

OF

RAITHBY HALL, LINCOLNSHIRE,

(A Pattern of Genuine Christianity from his early life,)

THE FOLLOWING SHEETS

ARE MOST RESPECTFULLY INSCRIBED,

AS A

TOKEN OF THE SINCERE LOVE AND ESTEEM

OF

HIS OBLIGED

AND OBEDIENT SERVANT,

THE AUTHOR.

HOWDEN, JULY 13, 1801.



INTRODUCTORY ADDRESS.

IN the following sheets, the author is aware that he treads a beaten and an ancient path. And he is conscious of being much more solicitous to avoid error, and to enrich the mind with solid instruction, than to indulge in novelty of thought. His sole wish is, to meet the peculiar exigencies of the age, and to contribute his mite with the multitude, to the public store of sacred knowledge.

He has read, at least, one hundred and fifty volumes expressly written upon this subject, besides occasionally consulting a great number of other works; it being requisite that nothing of importance should be omitted in a treatise of this nature. Some of the above works have been written by philosophers and divines who were never exceeded in genius and literature. Persons acquainted with these writings can expect nothing new with regard to the original evidences of Christianity. They stand exposed like a fabric on a rock, which cannot be shaken by the caprice of future times. However, as we approach nearer to the glory of the latter day, something new, perhaps, may be expected with regard to the unaccomplished prophecies which respect that happy age.

The author has remarked with extreme concern, that among the many dignified preachers, who have distinguished themselves at our established lectures for the defence of Christianity, few indeed have treated of the new birth, and of the operations of the Holy Spirit. They have displayed their learning in dull and sober argumentation, but have neglected to warm and interest the heart. This is the real cause why their volumes have produced so little effect, and why they have remained in fair bindings for a hundred years. What can be more insipid than a mere system of religious notions, cold and unapplied? If it be really true, in order to avoid enthusiasm, that the understanding alone is to be exercised in religious concerns, how is the depraved heart to be reformed, and man restored to the image of God?

The peculiar bias of this age towards infidelity, renders it necessary for the Christian world to be acquainted at large with the foundation of their faith, and to secure their consecrated offspring against the prevailing corruption. Deism, Socinianism, Materialism, and innumerable casts of skepticism, have gained the ascendancy in our literary productions. Were the contagion confined to novels and plays, complaint would scarcely be made; but it contaminates our Encyclopædias, Reviews, Travels and Sermons. Hence, our subscription libraries, so well calculated to diffuse knowledge and improve the mind, are likely to become institutions of ruin to the enlightened part of

the nation. It is deeply to be regretted, that the gentry and tradesmen who pay an exterior reverence to Christianity, should be so incautious or lukewarm as to crowd their libraries with books of this description. Secure and unalarmed for themselves, they treasure up with perfect indifference, a source of immoral doctrines for their children and the rising age.

From books, and characters of this description, Christian parents, so circumstanced, cannot wholly secure their children. They abound in all the public intercourse of society, and frequently find their way into the retreats of private life. Every one should therefore be armed at an early period against those licentious principles, which at once would supersede the laws of morality, and rob him of his immortal hope in Jesus Christ.

Young people, especially, should be apprised of the method which infidels take to destroy the faith. They seldom attack Christianity by argument, because they cannot succeed by their boasted powers of reason. They seldom appeal to historic evidence, for Christianity is already established by facts, and many of those facts have been acknowledged by its enemies. But *wit* is their favorite fort. By this mere appearance of argument, people of weak and dissipated minds are readily prevailed upon to give up a religion so restrictive of their passions, and which they were never instructed to defend. With him who is properly acquainted with the truth of his religion, the case is otherwise. He

appeals to the glory and fulness of the internal evidences of Christianity, as admirably adapted to promote the happiness of society, to afford adequate consolation to sinful men, and to secure the honor of God in our salvation. He takes sanctuary under a cloud of evidence, deduced from the indisputable accomplishment of the scripture prophecies. By these, St. Paul confounded the Jews at Damascus; by these, Porphyry, in fact, confessed himself vanquished, when he said, that Daniel's prophecy of the seventy weeks was written after the events had taken place. He retorts the arguments of infidels on their own absurd and contradictory systems. They shrink for want of ground, while he remains unshaken on the rock.

However, it is not argument alone, but holiness, productive of every virtue, which is the ultimate object of religious education. In this view, it is essentially connected with domestic happiness. Parents, most assuredly, would have their children to be possessed of virtue, and especially of filial virtue. But the moral conduct requires the support of moral principles. The wiser heathens discovered, at an early period of society, that virtue could not be supported unless founded on the belief in a *God*, a *providence*, and a *future state*. No man will properly honor his parents, who does not honor and worship his Maker: and no man will be deterred from the commission of secret crimes unless he believe that he cannot escape the judgments of God. Would we, therefore, prevent the embarrassment and ruin, the seduction and suicide, which so fre-

quently attend a life of dissipation and infidelity, we should habituate our children to converse with truth, with providence, and with their own hearts. Religious instruction should constitute an essential branch of education in all our public seminaries.— A tutor is not qualified for his office, unless he teach his pupils to prefer the sacred scriptures to the classics of Greece and Rome ; and those Christian philosophers who have so happily united revelation and literature, to those unprincipled authors who have distinguished themselves in the schools of infidelity.

Children are educated for business, and accomplished for the world, with the utmost attention.— No cost is spared to procure them the best books, and the ablest teachers. But the Christian philosophy, which alone can set them right as creatures with their Creator, and as sinners with their Saviour, is left to be gleaned from detached sermons, and a few family books, which are perhaps ill chosen, seldom read, and never studied. Hence it is, that they never understand the beauty and perfection of the religion they profess. It has never been exhibited to them in such an entire view, as to gain the judgment, and impress the heart ; consequently, they can never embrace it with a enlightened and conscientious regard.

To accomplish these desirable objects, and exhibit the Christian religion in as enlarged a view as corresponds with the brevity of the work, has avowedly been the wish of the author. He has

commenced with natural religion, and followed the light of gradual revelation, through the Patriarchal, the Jewish, and Christian dispensations; because, being immediately connected, they illustrate each other. He has endeavoured to conduct the devout pupil from the outward to the inner courts of the temple; that having leisurely viewed the several parts, he may be able to contemplate the admirable wisdom of God in the combination of the whole.—This work being designed for schools and families, is divided into sections, and the arguments are numbered in Roman capitals: the connexion being rendered easy by distinctions, and the lessons proportioned to the time and capacity of the reader, the progress is facilitated. But here, as in the acquisition of science, verbal explications should be given of the terms. And by going two or three times over the book, in this way, the pupil will be initiated into the Christian religion, prepared to read the sacred scriptures with pleasure, and to hear sermons with edification.

May the Almighty God give his blessing to these poor labors, and so irradiate the mind of the reader, that he may pay an enlightened homage to his Maker, and repose his soul in the arms of his Redeemer, from a full conviction of the truth and reasonableness of the Christian religion.

LEEDS, May 10, 1803.

INTRODUCTION

TO

CHRISTIANITY.

SECTION I.

GENERAL RULES, COMPREHENDING THE DOCTRINES, DUTIES,
AND DEFECTS OF NATURAL RELIGION.

Il n'est point ici bas de lumière sans ombres
Eieu ne s'y montre à nous que sous de voiles sombres :
La colonne qui luit dans ce désert affreux,
Tourne aussi quelquefois son côté ténébreux.

RACINE.

ENTERING NOW ON the subject, which comprehends our happiness in this and the future world ; which discovers the nature, and fixes the rewards of vice and virtue ; which unfolds the divine economy in the restoration of man to holiness and heaven, it solicits a consideration adequate to its importance, and claims the study of our calmest and most retired moments.

A survey of the visible heavens, connected with the minuter studies of natural history, always inspires the heart with devotion ; and enraptures the soul with gratitude to the Creator, who is possessed of perfections and happiness far above all that mortals can comprehend. We shall therefore commence by a demonstration of his being and attributes, deduced from his works ; and lay down the received doctrines of natural religion, as the basis of the Christian fabric. Here our sole embarrassment is a superabundance of proof ;—we are dazzled

with lustre, the whole universe being full of the divine glory.

1. The existence of one supreme and eternal God, may be proved from the unanimous consent of all ages and nations. Though the heathens worshipped innumerable divinities, yet on emergencies, or when surprised by some sudden calamity, they would exclaim, "O the great God! O the good God!" or, "O the true God!"* Hence it is presumed, considering the diversity of their mythology, that they could not have been so unanimous in these exclamations, had not God impressed a conviction of his being and perfections on every bosom.

2. The spacious firmament of heaven; the magnitude, splendor, and harmony of its orbs; the variety, beauty, and uses of plants; the numerous substances of which the earth is composed; the mechanism, and forms of animal bodies, are so many striking evidences of the existence of the great Creator. Whether we view them separately, or harmonized in the glorious universe, they exhibit marks of contrivance and skill, which can never be fathomed. They all tend to some good, and must have proceeded from an overflowing source of wisdom, power, and love.

3. The being and perfections of God are further demonstrated by the preservation of harmony throughout the universe. The revolutions of the planets—the succession of the seasons—the growth of vegetables—the proportion of males and females, are connected with an immensity of minuter movements; and yet, the whole is conducted without discord, and without defect. How amazingly grand is the idea it presents of the comprehensive wisdom, the never-failing providence, and immutability of God!

* Justin Martyr's Apology.

4. The being and perfections of the Deity are farther proved from the rational powers of the human soul. By history, it can assemble all the preceding ages; and by prophecy, anticipate the future: it can converse with an immensity of objects, and draw conclusions from each; and yet, this amazing soul is no more than a *finite* being, circumscribed in all its powers. How inconceivably great and wise must he be, who has limited and proportioned the powers of man, and in whose sight all worlds of beings are as nothing!

5. The moral feelings of the human heart produce a world of evidence to the same effect. The remorse which is felt for sin, and especially for secret sin, and the pleasing sensations which attend the practice of virtue, impress a consciousness on the heart, of the existence of an omniscient Judge, who frowns on the wicked, and smiles on the good.

6. The helpless state in which infants are born, and in which quadrupeds produce their young, demonstrates, that the first beasts, as well as the first parents of mankind, were produced in stature sufficient to subsist on vegetables and fruits, and without the warmth and nourishment of milk. This proof of the commencement of our existence, equally proves that there must be a God, or a cause of our existence, who, in our creation, has deviated from the laws of generation.

7. Reason and observation demonstrate, that the earth also was created. Its revolutions are regulated by fixed periods, and no number of periods can be infinite. Nor can it have existed from any very remote period, or the rains and floods, which constantly wash away substances from the mountains, would have levelled them with the vallies. The same may be observed with regard to the tides which warp the marshy grounds; they must long

ago have raised them equal to the highest inundations.

Hence every creature manifests the existence of the great Creator, who has discovered the perfection of wisdom in the formation and harmony of the world, and manifested his goodness to every creature. May we adore his exalted majesty with an enlightened and a humble reverence! may we praise him with a grateful heart! and imitate him in all his works of holiness and truth.

II. The doctrine, which ranks, in point of importance, next to the being of God, is, the immortality of the soul. The intimations which the religion of nature affords upon this subject, have been strong enough to satisfy the more wise and virtuous among the heathens; and it has scarcely ever been doubted by man in a savage state. We shall select the arguments which seem the most conclusive.

I. Matter, however modified, can neither reason, perceive, nor will: hence, that being in man which is endowed with these powers, must be distinct from the body, it can have no principles which tend to corruption.

2. The powers of reason, perception, and volition, being independent of sensation, as appears from the phenomenon of dreaming, prove in the opinion of many, that the soul may exercise all these powers when the senses are dissolved; and consequently, that it is capable of an immortal existence.

3. The love of immortality, which all men feel, especially good men, attaches a strong probability to the doctrine of a future state: God having formed the eye for vision, gratifies it with a world of sublime and beautiful objects; and having formed this love of immortality the strongest of our propensities, we have the justest ground of confidence that he will also gratify it. If otherwise, this propensi-

ty was given us in vain ; because it is distinct from the principle of self-preservation.

4. The inexhaustible resources of knowledge and happiness which God hath provided for our enjoyment, and the continual progress which the soul is capable of making in virtue, strongly indicate the reality of a future state, and the immortality of the soul ; because in this short life we die before we have more than glanced on the works of creation ; and those providences which so immediately concern us, we leave involved in clouds of darkness, which the wisest mortals are unable to penetrate.

5. The immortality of the soul is also inferred from the moral government of God. In this world, the virtuous often suffer from a complication of evils, while the wicked are indulged in affluence and repose. Little children suffer also both pain and death ; and it seems highly improbable, that the God of infinite felicity should have created these amiable beings for the sole purpose of suffering exquisite misery. That he should have made a difference in the distribution of temporal and intellectual endowments, is agreeable to reason ; but, that he should really afflict the innocent, and prosper the guilty, seems, in a moral view, to require a future state of rewards and punishments, in which he will clear up the obscurity of providence, and discover the equity of his ways.

If this life, therefore, be a probation for that which is to come, if every action be connected with everlasting happiness or misery, how careful should we be to abstain from evil, how vigilant to do good, and how emulous to prepare the soul for the exalted happiness of a future world !—O immortal God, hast thou tenanted these perishing habitations with a being of such dignity and worth ? Let us never degrade it by ignoble and sensual pursuits. Deigu

of thy great goodness to guide our steps to thee, the author and end of our existence; that seeking our happiness, not in the transient enjoyments of this life, but in loving thee, the source of everlasting happiness and model of all perfection, we may find the consolations of pure religion, the vast rewards of immortality and eternal joy.

III. Having considered the being of God, and the immortality of the soul, as the basis and permanent obligation of piety, we shall proceed to consider man as an inhabitant of the *natural*, the *moral*, and the *social* world. This shall be done with a view to make some further traces concerning the doctrines, duties and defects of natural religion.

1. In the *natural* world, were the happiness of man unconnected with real misery, we should regard it as very exalted. The sun diffuses his genial beams over him by day, and the moon and stars illuminate the night. Summer and winter, seed-time and harvest, succeed one another without interruption. The earth supplies him with food, and rewards his toil with a liberal increase. His eyes have an ample range through the universe, and, with the rapidity of his thoughts, compensate for the confined situation of his body. His wants are all supplied by moderate labor, his pains and sorrows are alleviated by innumerable indulgences, and all his powers are gratified by the contemplation of nature's inexhaustible sources of beauty and delight. What has he then to do but to gladden his toil with hymns of praise to his Maker, and to kindle his soul with the flame of philosophical devotion?—But oh! as the skipping lamb is seized by the prowling wolf, so death, inexorable death, rudely breaks in upon all his comforts, and blasts his hopes by a single stroke!

2. In the *social* world, if a man have the happiness to descend from virtuous parents, and to form

virtuous connexions, his comforts are of a very endearing nature ; though not without such a mixture of evils as forbids immoderate sorrow for the loss of friends and children. He is caressed in the bosom of his family with the fondest affection, and surrounded with the endearing relatives of father—mother—brother—sister—tutor and friend. His happiness is made the growing object of his parents' hope. Surely then he ought to obey their wise and just commands, and to reverence and cherish their hoary age. In the world at large, he sees some providing food, and others raiment, for the public : he sees others traversing the seas, and by the imports and exports of useful and luxurious comforts, connecting the whole world as one great empire.—In private life, his repose and property are protected by equitable laws, and those laws enforced by a gradation of magistracy from the prince to the people. This view of society should instruct him to regard every man as a brother, friend, or patriot. It should dispose him to conform to the laws ; obey the magistrates ; and honor his sovereign, as the most sacred person, in whose happiness is involved the happiness of all his subjects.

3. From this flattering sketch of social life, we proceed to the moral world, in which the sad reverse of things is generally presented to our view. Those virtues which should be the brightest ornaments of human nature, are so contaminated with selfishness, and the prevalence of deceit or open fraud, that the dearest friends and relatives are afraid to trust one another. The strong propensities of mankind to intemperance and sensual indulgence ; their fondness of the resorts of vanity, and, we may frequently add the haunts of infamy, are productive of fatal consequences to personal and domestic happiness. Oaths and honor are violated, and characters indelibly stained in the seduction of unprotected inno-

cence ; nor can it be said, that a ruined woman has any adequate means of redress. Among the great nations in which the glory of empire is a prevailing principle, trivial infringements of treaties, or violations of the laws of commerce, are embraced with avidity to occasion destructive wars. Peaceable provinces are half depopulated and ruined : and seldom does the contest cease till the flower of their youth is cut off, and till their resources are exhausted. O what pride, rage, and revenge, is in the heart of man ! O what carnage, what devastation, and what impurities, have ensued on the taking of great cities ! Such are the dispositions of bad men, when, for the moment, their lawless passions are without a rein.

Great God ! are these indeed thy creatures ? Hast thou formed them with hearts like these ? Have they learned of thee, whose tender mercies are over all thy works, to destroy one another ? Couldst thou, who hast blessed all thy creatures, teach them to blaspheme ? O no ! these evils have befallen them since their creation. They have shaken off the restraints of thy law, set thy judgments at defiance, and perverted liberty to their own destruction.

IV. Hence it follows, that there is a distinguished difference between good and evil, right and wrong, vice and virtue. God having made man to live, it must be wrong to kill him, especially while young, when he may have the greatest domestic or national services to achieve. But the crime is not merely an injury to an individual and to society, it is an invasion of the Creator's right to dispose of his creature. This principle strongly applies to belligerent nations : for the causes of war bear no proportion to the consequences. And if the features of good and evil be so conspicuous in the great actions of society, they may be traced with

equal precision in all the economy of private life : in honesty and fraud ; in kindness and injury ; in truth and falsehood ; in blessing and cursing. Nature, which is kind and indulgent to all, admonishes us to imitate her example ; and if it be virtuous to imitate the divine beneficence, and to conform the heart to his will, it must be vicious to deviate from the model of perfect goodness.

V. We may further remark, that vice is generally attended with some degree of appropriate punishment. Whenever we sin against God, against our neighbor, or against ourselves, we must on the slightest reflection, be covered with shame, and stung with remorse. By wicked and ungenerous actions, we forfeit our moral character, and lose the esteem of good men. Profligacy is productive of wretchedness ; and intemperance will superinduce disease. The laws of nature are replete with rectitude and truth ; but we hate the light, being full of meanness and misery. Hence, when bad men have proceeded so far in a course of impiety, as to pervert all their powers, and fill up the measure of their iniquity, it becomes requisite for the righteous God to cut them off, and hide them in the shades of death.

It is granted, that wicked men often live to a great age, and retain their vices to the last ; consequently, that the chastisements of providence are very mysterious : yet we can frequently discover a striking correspondence between the sins and punishments of some men in this life. And though these punishments, at most, are but partial, yet we may fairly presume from the equity of God, that they will be completed in the future state. If the soul were wicked when embodied, it is wicked when disembodied. Length of time does not diminish the magnitude of an offence, and duration of punishment does not moralize the hearts of the impeni-

tent. The aged, on a review of their early vices, which have not been followed by the proper fruits of repentance, find the same sensations as they found when those sins were first committed. Hence, if a man's conscience make him unhappy on his downy pillow, and in his own neighborhood, it will make him unhappy when he removes to another country; yea, when he makes his exit to another world. Local changes can neither conceal him from his Maker, nor obliterate the recollection of his crimes. Consequently, how we may now be saved from sin, and ensure a blissful immortality, are our grand and indispensable enquiries. The common affairs of life are merely trifles when compared with these important duties.

VI. The doctrines of expiation, and virtue, have been largely discussed by pagan and skeptical writers, through a long succession of ages, and always in a way confused and undefined. With regard to expiation, some have enjoined penance, ablution, and liberality to the poor. But how can the washing or mortifying the flesh take away sins which defile the mind? How can liberality to the poor atone for crimes committed against our Maker? or, if it could, what is the bulk of mankind to do, who have nothing to give? Some, convinced of the inefficacy of these means, have extolled the divine clemency, and assured us, that he will forgive the frailties of his offending creatures, if we ask him with sincere repentance. This is indeed a consoling doctrine, and we should cheerfully embrace it, did it not leave the divine government insecure, by allowing the creatures to offend with impunity. God will never exercise his mercy but in harmony with his justice; nor dare we presume upon a system of unqualified mercy, because it is contrary to providence, which reveals the awful judgments of God, and punishes mankind with death.

In addition to this system of pure mercy, a system of morality, approaching as near to perfection as possible, is also recommended. We are promised happiness, provided we moderate our desires according to our enjoyments, and our expenses according to our income, exercising benevolence towards our fellow creatures. But in what book is this perfect standard of morals laid down? The master and the servant, the economist and the prodigal, the prince and the people, biased by situation, must ever produce systems discordant and incomplete. The Socinian, finding his favourite fort of pure mercy untenable, at length takes refuge in the scheme of philosophical necessity; which is much the same as the pagan doctrine of fate. Yes, after some hesitation, he swallows the opiate, "Whatever is, is right." Happy way of solving difficulties, and exonerating his conscience, by charging all his crimes upon his Maker!!!

VII. On all the preceding subjects, it must be confessed, that the religion of nature is extremely defective. It demonstrates the existence of sin, and the certainty of its punishment, but affords no positive assurance of pardon. It affords every presumptive proof of a future state, but does not say what that state shall be. It demonstrates the being and perfections of God, and our obligations to worship him, but does not say whether he will receive the worship of sinful men. It prescribes a system of pure morality, to which the human heart is unable to conform. It requires perfect love, and perfect obedience to God: and to presume that he will accept of imperfect services, is comparing the Deity to a tradesman, who asks one price for his goods, and takes another. Here human moralists have all lost their way; for they still consider man as in his state of original excellence, and they are unable to account for his present meanness and mis-

ery. They are all dissatisfied with their own conclusions. They change opinions on the accession of every lucid thought; and follow it with their eyes as a meteor, till it leads them to the same uncertainty. Things which are impenetrable, they account absurd; or, by rash endeavours to explain them, they embrace absurdities which render them ridiculous in the estimation of common men. Here indeed we want the pitying aid of revelation; for uncertainty on subjects so important, is painful as death to a considerate mind.

Yet we have no cause for apprehension. Despondency would be a crime. From a general view of the goodness of God in caring for the body, we may be fully assured, he has not neglected the soul. He supplies our temporal wants with a munificence worthy of himself; and he cannot have neglected the more important and everlasting interests of the immortal spirit.

In the kingdom of nature, he has provided remedies for most of the diseases incident to the body: consequently, he cannot have neglected the more inveterate diseases of the heart. What father could see his numerous offspring exposed to the ensnarements and vices of the world, and withhold from them the necessary counsel and caution? How much more then must our heavenly father have given a plenitude of instruction to those men, whom it hath been the peculiar delight of his providence to honor!

It may here be asked, and with ardour too, which is the book—which is the book?—The Christian world have given an uniform answer—It is the BIBLE, and the BIBLE only, which is the untainted repository of these divine instructions. God hath so loved the world as to send his Son Jesus Christ to be the propitiation for our sins, and reconcile all things to himself. He hath inspired his anointed

servants, the prophets and apostles, with the knowledge of his will ; and they have transmitted to us, in the holy scriptures, the substance of their plenary instructions, and without the least impairs, which affect either their authenticity or their doctrines.

After a tedious night of error and impiety, in which the Heathen world have groped for happiness, aided by the dim taper of reason only, revelation breaks forth like the cheering dawn of day, and shows us the paths of righteousness and life.—It supplies all the defects of natural religion, and is in itself complete, beyond the possibility of improvement. Let us hasten, therefore, to the pleasing scene, to review Christianity in the light of the Lord. Let us review it not in a detached and promiscuous throng, as stones and timbers dispersed in a field, but as a glorious temple, admirably arranged, and nobly formed by the hand of God.

SECTION II.

OF THE CREATION AND FALL OF MAN—OF THE PATRIARCHAL DISPENSATION—AND OF THE MOSAIC LAW.

IN the beginning God created the elements, which compose the heavens and the earth in a chaotic state, and his omnipresent spirit actuated the fertile mass.

He said, "Let there be light, and there was light ; and he separated the light from the darkness ; and God saw that the light was good." He exhaled the clouds from the waters of the ocean, and caused the dry land to appear. He clothed the earth with all this rich profusion of grass, and herbs, and trees, that it might give food to all his creatures. He formed the sun, moon and stars ; harmonised the spheres, and appointed them for

signs and seasons, and to rule the days and years. He peopled the waters with fish, the heavens with fowl, the herbs with insects, and the hills and vales with beasts and cattle. The whole was an amazing gradation of society, arranged in perfect harmony and order. "And God saw that it was good."

On the last day of the creation God made man of the dust of the earth, and woman of his rib, or part of his side. The excellence and dignity of his nature may be inferred from the Creator's proceeding to do it in council. "And God said, let us make man in our image, and after our likeness : so in the image of God created he him ; male and female created he them." From this counsel and sociality in the Deity is obviously inferred the doctrine of the most holy Trinity, or the one God, made known to us in the New Testament by the name of Father, Son and Spirit.

The body of Adam, for so the Lord called him, was ennobled above the bodies of brutes, by its delicacy and erect figure ; and by its countenance, which probably shone with a visible glory. To this body of exquisite beauty, God united a soul, endowed with angelic perfections, resembling himself in knowledge, holiness, and righteousness, or propensities to rectitude. The orbs of heaven were governed by absolute laws, but man, being a free and intelligent creature was governed by a moral injunction. God entered into covenant with him, in which all his posterity were included.

I. The happy pair were placed in the garden of Eden, that they might dress and keep it, and subsist on its produce. But when permission was given to eat of its fruits, God reserved one tree to himself, which Adam was enjoined, on pain of death, neither to touch nor taste. It was the Creator's prerogative, and the seal of the covenant ; and it taught man, that though he was lord of the creation,

he was nevertheless a subordinate creature, and in a state of probation. This test of integrity, the Creator had an undoubted right to impose ; and it seems perfectly easy, and suited to the situation of man. Surely the difficulty of abstaining from one tree could not be great, while he had a whole paradise of the most delicious fruits. Such was the free, the high and happy situation of our first parents when the tragic day of trial came ; when the prince of apostate angels determined to attempt their ruin, by seducing them from their allegiance to God.—To effectuate this he took possession of the serpent, which they knew to be more sagacious than any of the beasts, and on that account would respect its advice. He assailed the woman in the absence of her husband, lest by mutual counsel they should have rejected the crime. Speaking in the serpent, he asked, whether it were true, that they might eat of every tree in the garden ? She not knowing all the powers of the serpent, nor that he was actuated by an evil angel, answered, “ we may eat of every tree, except the tree of knowledge of good and evil ; of that God hath said, ye shall not eat, neither shall ye touch it, lest ye die.” He replied, “ ye shall not surely die ; the prohibition is unreasonable, and God has enjoined it to keep you in bondage ; for he well knows, that in the day ye eat of it, ye shall be as the gods, who fill the thrones of heaven, knowing good and evil.” To this elating and treasonable speech, the woman assented, and seeing the delicious quality of the fruit, she presumed to pluck and eat ; and taking some to her husband, seduced him by the same arguments, and by the more weighty argument of her own example, and he did also eat. Immediately their eyes were opened to see the nature of their dreadful crime. They saw how they had been duped by believing the serpent in preference to God. Ungrateful for their high

and happy situation, they saw how they had ambitiously aspired at angelic perfection, violated the covenant, and forfeited their innocence. They saw also the nakedness and concupiscence of their bodies, and fled to hide among the trees of the garden. This was the first but great offence, and it has occasioned every moral and natural evil which afflicts mankind.

Immediately after the fall, God proceeded to convict and sentence the three offenders to sorrow, toil, and death, but he closed the judicial process with this grand promise of redemption,—“the seed of the woman shall bruise the serpent’s head.” Frequent allusion is made to this in the New Testament; it is applied to Jesus Christ, in whom it receives its full completion. See John xvi. 11. Rom. xvi. 20. Heb. ii. 14. 1 John iii. 8. Christ was here promised to assume the human nature of the woman; and to die for our sin, that every man might be restored once more to a state of probation, and regain by faith in him both holiness and heaven.—How exceedingly rich was the mercy of God, which gave his only begotten Son, and how awful the justice, which freely delivered him up for us all! How adorable was that love, and how profound that wisdom, which, taking occasion by the evils of the fall, have brought so much glory to himself, and happiness to man, by restoring him to a better paradise than Adam lost. May we all therefore embrace this new covenant, founded on better promises than the former, and confide in this Mediator, “who is able to save to the uttermost all that come to God by him, seeing he ever liveth to make intercession.”

II. From the Lord’s clothing our first parents with skins, and from Abel’s bringing the firstlings of his flock, we may presume, that Adam was instructed to approach his Maker by sacrifices for sin;

that is, by burning the body of a perfect animal, and sprinkling the blood upon himself, and afterwards upon his offending children. These oblations had an obvious reference to the death of Christ; they shewed the sinner the death he ought to die; and being accompanied with purifications and prayer, instructed him in the nature of holiness and devotion.

From the period that God thus entered into covenant with fallen man, we find the Messiah under the appellations of JEHOVAH, of God, or of Angel, at the head of the human race. If the patriarchs, in the progress of society, needed his miraculous aid, he was at hand with his glorious hosts of angels, to support and instruct them; to unfold the secrets of his providence, and to chastise or destroy the wicked. He attended the altar of their devotion, and often with visible marks of his presence, and new tokens of his love. "He was always rejoicing in the habitable parts of the earth, and his delights were with the sons of men."

Hence the state of man was very much meliorated by the covenant of grace. His life was attended with innumerable comforts, and prolonged to great age. He had the promise of redemption, and was instructed in the worship and service of his Maker. And he was endowed with the aids of grace to subdue the corruptions of nature. And though he was still far from his former state of innocence, he was equally far from the state of fallen angels: he might evidently be considered as more than half restored, and once more in a state of probation.

III. But notwithstanding the numerous advantages derived from the new covenant, the deep stain of original depravity soon discovered itself in the unprovoked murder of Abel; for Cain could not have been instigated to it by precedent or by vicious connexions. The same may be observed of the irrita-

ble tempers of little children ; they can neither have imbibed them from habit, nor example. And if they were not made sinful by the fall, the just and righteous God would not so frequently punish them with pain and death. The human depravity is equally discoverable from our backwardness to devotion, and our proneness to act against the sober dictates of reason and conscience ; from our knowledge of virtue so far exceeding our virtuous affections and habits ; from the selfish passions which are obvious in the commercial intercourse of society ; and lastly, from the universal inundation of wickedness which has covered the earth. If these be the dreadful fruits of our apostacy, how extremely vitiated must the root be from which they all proceed !!! May God create in us a new heart, and renew a right spirit within us.

Piety, however flourished for several generations in the family of Seth. They adhered to the covenant and worship of God, and were called his sons. But by inter-marriages with the daughters of Cain, they became totally corrupted. Lamech, the seventh in Cain's line, introduced polygamy, which was followed with an universal profligacy of manners. They wholly abandoned themselves to voluptuousness and sensuality. When the sons of Elohim, or great men, saw the daughters of the poor, that they were fair, they seized them for concubines, and debauched them. "And the earth was filled with violence. And God saw that the wickedness of man was great upon the earth, and that the thoughts and imaginations of his heart were only evil continually." In vain did Enoch and Noah preach ; in vain did the former ascend to heaven, and the latter erect an ark. Pleasure alone was idolized, and the enthusiasm of the ark became the subject of universal laughter. But God honoured the ministry of his prophets by the accomplishment of their threaten-

ings. Having secured the one righteous family, he caused the rains to warn the wicked, and the seas to inundate the highest mountains of Asia,* filling their cavities with fishes and other marine productions, that their petrifications might attest his awful judgments in all places, and to the latest ages. So God washed away the filthy inhabitants of the earth; and in one way or other, he will destroy all who indulge in pleasure, and make light of the gospel.

IV. After the flood, God renewed his covenant with Noah and with his three sons, Shem, Ham and Japheth. He set his bow in the cloud as a pledge of the covenant, that he would no more destroy the earth by water. These patriarchs superintended their wandering families, and associated in their own persons the high offices of prophet, priest, and king. They officiated in all religious services, and were the sole legislators and instructors in their tribes. In this way the knowledge and worship of the true God were preserved for six or eight generations, and in some of the tribes, we may presume, for a much longer period. A specimen of their knowledge and piety may be seen in the book of Job, and in the character of Melchizedeck and Jethro, who were holy men.

A remarkable phenomenon happened to Ham, or rather to Cush, his eldest son, in the change of his skin from white to black.† We have satisfactory evidence of this from his posterity having peopled Africa. Egypt, says the psalmist, is the land of Cham or Ham. Herodotus says, that Chemmis, which derived its name from Cham, was a great

* If marine petrifications have not been found higher than 9000 feet, it is no disparagement of sacred history, as the tops of peaks seem to have been washed with an inundation. See *Darwin's Geological Essays*.

† See a larger account of this in Dr. Jenkin's "Reasonableness of Christianity," preface, p. 51.

city in Thebais.* Eupolemus affirms, on the credit of tradition, that Chum was the father of the Ethiopians, and that he was called by the Greeks Asbolas, which is soot or blackness. So Jeremiah: can the Ethiopian (the Cushite) change his skin? xiii. 23. The blacks populated so large a part of Africa, that Homer divides them into the eastern and western nations. These authorities establish the truth of the Mosaic history, that the whole race of mankind, however they may differ in colour, has descended from the patriarch Noah, and in the line of his three sons. And when their longevity and health are taken into consideration, the vast increase of their population perfectly accords with the sacred chronology. It should also be recollected, that we read of little war till the age of the patriarch Abraham; for God had prohibited the shedding of blood on pain of death, because man was made in the image of God, Gen. ix. 6.

The whole world, till the fourth generation from Noah, was of one language. And those who dwelt on the fertile banks of the Euphrates being unwilling to obey the Lord by emigration, began to build a tower, and to claim the country for a permanent habitation. But he threw it down, and obliged the seventy-two tribes to disperse, by confounding their language.

Previously to this period, Satan, the grand adversary of mankind, found means to corrupt the nations by a new species of wickedness; I would say, by confounding the worship of the true God, with the worship of those who were not gods.—Joshua xxiv. 2. The old world having been destroyed for want of religion, the new generation went to the opposite extreme: they paid idolatrous homage to the souls of the patriarchs, whom providence

*Thebes was the capital of this district.

had so distinguishedly honoured. This gross perversion of devotion could originate only from the extreme ignorance and wretchedness of the several tribes. Having, by a general decay of piety, and indulgence in vice, forsaken the covenant and worship of God, and being alternately afflicted with disease, famine, or war, they had recourse to the souls of their ancestors. In a while, they made pictures and statues according to their imaginary likenesses, and consecrated them to their memories. These were their household gods, which they preserved with the most religious care. Great men were ambitious to officiate at their altars, and knowing the absurdity of this devotion better than the people, they soon found it their interest to involve the history of their divinities in mystery and fable. At first this gross worship was confined to houses and groves, for there the good patriarchs were wont to worship the true and living God; but after a while the mysteries were adjourned to magnificent temples. Thus, "when they knew God by revelation and covenant, they glorified him not as God, neither were thankful; and their foolish heart was darkened, and they changed the glory of the incorruptible God into an image made like unto corruptible man, to birds, beasts, and creeping things. Therefore God peculiarly gave them up to the power of the devil, and to the concupiscence of their own hearts," Rom. i. 21. In the ages of Greek and Roman refinement, the multiplicity of divinities baffles all calculation; the profaneness of their mysteries and altars, stews and sports, exceeds the credibility of the modern world. Pitiable indeed, are the efforts of cultivated reason, when unassisted by the light of revelation, in the acquisition of wisdom and happiness.

Idolatry must have obtained before the dispersion of the tribes, and before the extremities of the

earth were colonized, or the American nations, and the islanders of the Pacific Ocean, would not have been all found immersed in pagan superstition.—The variety in their rituals, and in the objects of their worship, is no argument against this supposition, because the constant accession of new divinities, through a succession of ages, must have occasioned an inconceivable diversity in the mythology.

How America was peopled, and especially how wild beasts and serpents came there, long remained a doubt. But now it is generally believed, that Behring's Straits which separate it from Asia, must have been made by an earthquake. The West Indies, and the Terra Firma, were probably colonized by Phœnicians, either through adventures or tempests. Those of Chili and Peru seem to have originated from Asia, and the numerous isles of the Pacific Ocean.

When the Spaniards became acquainted with the inhabitants of South America, they found them ignorant of their origin: but they had a tradition of the flood, and that the whole race of mankind came from four women; that is, from the wife of Noah, and the wives of his three sons, which perfectly coincides with the Mosaic history.*

Our learned and assiduous countrymen in Asia, have latterly explored abundance of valuable information in the ancient and modern literature of the Indostan empire. By the Asiatic researches of Sir John Shore, Sir William Jones, and others: and by the Indian antiquities of Mr. Maurice; we are enabled to compare the doctrines and religious customs of the Druids† in the west, with those of the

* Universal History, vol. xx.

† This name, so distinguished in mythology, is derived from *Δρυς*, oak; for among oaks or groves those ancient ministers of religion performed their devotion. See Gen. xiii. 18. xviii. 1. where the plain of Mamre is rendered by the Septuagint, the oak of Mamre.

Brahma, Veeshnu, Seeva, and Buddha of the east, and to trace back their origin with considerable satisfaction to the patriarchal age. Besides, these writings further coincide with the Mosaic history concerning the peopling of the earth by the sons of Noah. Consequently they supersede the negations and childish conjectures of our modern unbelievers. Historic evidence will ever claim preference of unfounded conjecture.

V. Having so far illustrated the sacred history, we shall next contemplate the Messiah's economy in giving an early check to idolatry, by the call of Abraham, and by taking the Hebrews to be a people peculiarly his own. It has been observed already, that when the whole world, with the exception of one family, were corrupted, God saved that family and drowned all the others. On the same principle of justice and mercy, he now preserved the posterity of Jacob from the general corruption. — Agreeably to this he called Abraham from his father's house in Mesopotamia, who were partially corrupted with idolatry, and confirmed to him the promise of the *seed*, Gen. xii. 3. God led him to the land of Canaan or Palestine, and gave him the whole country by promise, because he was determined to destroy the inhabitants for their wickedness. During his emigration and wanderings, God made him the peculiar object of his providential care. He often appeared to him, and renewed and enlarged his covenant, and talked with him as with his friend. He made him a pattern of faith and piety to his family, and to his wicked neighbors, and to the church in all the succeeding ages. This covenant was likewise renewed and confirmed with Isaac, and with Jacob, and with Judah, who succeeded Reuben in the birth right, because he had defiled his father's bed, 1 Chron. v. 1, 2. It was lastly confirmed with David, to whom God promised to build a sure house;

and that they should rule over his people for ever, Psalm lxxxix.

VI. Conformably to this covenant, God increased the Hebrews, while oppressed in Egypt, in a very extraordinary manner, and delivered them precisely at the time he had promised to Abraham, Gen. xv. He divided the sea, and led them into the wilderness, amidst a cloud of miracles. On the fiftieth day, his glory covered the top of Mount Sinai, attended with a cloud, and lightnings, and thunder, and earthquake, and his voice distinctly pronounced the ten commandments. The people being sanctified, surrounded the mountain, and bounds were set, that neither man nor beast might approach it; which shows, that we cannot approach God by our imperfect endeavors to keep those precepts. The law is holy, but since the fall we are unholy. It was given to display God's moral perfections, and to shew the number and magnitude of our offences.—Hence, “by the deeds of the law shall no flesh living be justified.”

The ceremonial law was a shadow of good things to come; so it is explained in the epistle to the Hebrews, and in many other places in the New Testament. The tabernacle, with all its emblematical apparatus, was a portable habitation, made after the model which God shewed Moses on the mount, and it was figurative of the great body of saints, who are sojourning to a better world. The mercy-seat, in the most holy place, was a throne of gold, on which God dwelt in visible glory, and being surrounded by the cherubim, represented God sitting on his throne of grace in heaven, surrounded by angels and saints. The ark of the covenant was before him, to shew that he is ever mindful of his promises. The candlestick with seven lamps, and the bread exposed on the table, were figurative of the light and food which the soul receives by ap-

proaching God. The holy altar on which incense was burned, represented the prayers of the saints, Rev. v. 8. The annual atonement of the red heifer, which was burnt without the camp, whose blood the high priest sprinkled on the vail in the most holy place, represented the death of Christ, without the gate of Jerusalem, and his entrance into heaven, by his own blood, to appear in the presence of God for us, Heb. ix. 12, &c. The sin-offerings of individuals who had sinned, or made themselves legally unclean, consisted of bulls, sheep, and goats; of lambs, kids, and doves; and they teach us, that every sin has need to be expiated by a fresh application of the blood of Christ. The waters of purification sprinkled on the unclean, and the washings in the laver, presignified the washing and renewing of the Holy Ghost, or that "holiness without which no man shall see the Lord." The holy fire, which fell from heaven and consumed the first sacrifice, which fire was always kept burning by the priests, adumbrated the gift of the Holy Ghost, and the love of God shed abroad in the hearts of all his saints, Acts ii. Rom. v. 5.

Having touched on the principal parts of the tabernacle, and branches of its service, we shall next speak a word of the Jewish political law. The God of Israel, by forming his people into a theocracy, and giving them peculiar precepts of holiness; by delivering them from Pharaoh, supporting them in the wilderness, and giving them the promised land, designed to make them a type of his true Israel, whom he redeems, preserves, and causes to pass over the Jordan of death, into the promised rest, Heb. iii. 9. God designed also to check idolatry, to shame and reform the apostate nations, by showing them the health, peace, and prosperity of a nation, who retained the knowledge, and adhered to the worship of the true God, as revealed to Noah

and the patriarchs : and all these blessings would have been enjoyed by the Jews, had they kept their covenant with God. But by rebelling against the Lord, they brought upon themselves the curses, which their law had denounced. He further designed to strengthen the evidences of our most holy religion, by making the past dispensations a basis to the present, that it might be acknowledged by all, that *Christianity* is as old as the creation. He designed finally, by these laws, to instruct them in the doctrines of a future state. This was particularly signified by the most holy place. It was exemplified by the translation of Enoch, and by the peregrinations of the patriarch Abraham, who looked for a better country ; that is, a habitation in the heavens. It is true, the carnal Jews did not understand the full object of their ritual and political laws ; but the faithful saw in them a dawn, at least, of the gospel glory. Hence we read, that sacrifice was offered by faith, Heb. xi. 4 to 17 :—that Abraham saw the day of Christ, John viii. 56 :—that Moses esteemed the reproach of Christ greater riches than the treasures of Egypt, Heb. xi. 23, 26.

In addition to these divine emblems, we must add a few observations on some of the typical persons. Adam is called “the figure of him that was to come,” Rom. v. 14. In regard to his creation in innocence, and his being the father of the human race, there is a striking contrast between him and Jesus Christ, 1 Cor. xv. 22. Isaac, the beloved son of Abraham, and his only son by promise, by being voluntarily bound, laid on the altar, after having carried the wood ; delivered from death, and made the father of Israel and Edom, strikingly represented Jesus, the only begotten of the Father who was raised from the dead, and made the Father of all his saints.—Joseph, who was sold by his brethren, persecuted for chastity, and elevated from the prison to the

right hand of Pharaoh, is, if possible, a yet more expressive type of Jesus Christ. What a gracious and instructive providence superintended the families in the ancient world! What displays of goodness, mercy, and justice, are here depicted! May they teach us to confide in the divine care, to abstain from the vices which consumed the wicked, and to imitate those who had the testimony, that they pleased God.

SECTION III.

GRADUAL REVELATION TO THE HOLY PROPHETS CONCERNING THE PERSON AND OFFICES OF CHRIST.

HAVING considered the history of grace to the establishment of the Jewish nation, and the principal types and emblems of Christ, we shall now proceed to some of the more distinguished predictions, which respect his person and offices. The study of these is of the greatest importance to the support of our faith, and the increase of our comfort. They prove, that Christianity is not a novel invention, but correctly founded on the types and rituals of divine institution, and on revelations to the holy prophets, since the commencement of the world. In the understanding and application of these, our Lord instructed his disciples previously to his passion.—But he did not complete these instructions till after his resurrection. To two of his disciples, who were going to Emmaus, he appeared by the way, and expounded to them those scriptures, which speak of his sufferings and entrance into glory. Their eyes were holden that they should not know him, lest being elated with the joy of his resurrection, they should have neglected the force of his arguments. While attending to the discourse of the supposed stranger, the light of truth shone upon their under-

standing, and the love of God enkindled their hearts. "They said one to another," after he had disappeared, "did not our hearts burn within us while he talked with us by the way, and while he opened to us the scriptures?" Luke xxiv. 32. O that God would favour us with similar instruction and comfort, while we proceed to review the same predictions!

1. Gen. iii. 14, 15. "And the Lord God said unto the serpent—I will put enmity between thee and the woman, and between thy seed and her seed; it shall bruise thy head, and thou shalt bruise his heel." The seed of the serpent is sin, and all its consequences—sorrow, pain, and death. The seed of the woman is Christ, who assumed the human nature of the virgin Mary, that he might destroy the works of the devil. Hence, by bruising his head, is meant our Saviour's expiation of sin on the cross, his destruction of it in our hearts by regeneration, and his abolishing death by a resurrection to eternal life, of which his own is the pledge. Bruising his heel is figurative of serpents biting the heel, and it refers to the successful combination of Satan and his children, to crucify the Lord of life and glory. By their agency, it pleased the Lord to bruise him, and put him to grief, when he made his soul an offering for sin, Isa. liii. 10.

2. Gen. xxii. 16, 18. "By myself have I sworn, saith the Lord, because thou hast done this thing, and hast not withheld thy son, thine only son; that in blessing I will bless thee, and in multiplying I will multiply thy seed as the stars of heaven, and as the sand which is on the sea-shore, and thy seed shall possess the gate of his enemies; and in thy seed shall all the families of the earth be blessed." The carnal nation of the Jews were hereby made an obvious type of Christ's spiritual Israel, who are a great multitude, which no man can number.—The Messiah, who is this seed of Abraham, began

to accomplish this prediction when he vanquished the powers of darkness on the cross, and when he began to destroy their kingdom and establish his own on its ruins ; and he will complete it in the latter day's glory, when "all dominions shall serve and obey him," Dan. vii. 27.

3. Gen. xlix. 10. "The sceptre shall not depart from Judah, nor the law-giver from between his feet, until Shiloh come ; and unto him shall the gathering of the people be," &c. This prophecy marks the regal dignity of the tribe of Judah, and its abject situation at the birth of Shiloh, with the utmost historic precision. The legislative authority really did continue in the house of David, and the Asmoncan family, till the time of Herod, who slew the infants of Bethlehem. And when Jesus was about ten or twelve years of age, Menelaus, the son of Herod, was deposed, and Judea governed by a pagan proconsul, who deprived the Jews of their power of inflicting capital punishment. With regard to the gathering of the people to the Shiloh, we need only appeal to the early progress of Christianity, and to the promises of its universal diffusion. "Every knee shall bow to him, and every tongue confess, that Jesus Christ is Lord to the glory of God the Father."

4. Deut. xviii. 15. "The Lord thy God will raise up unto thee a prophet from the midst of thee, of thy brethren, like unto me ; unto him shall ye hearken," &c. This prediction is applied to Jesus by Philip, John i. 45.—by Peter, Acts iii. 22.—and by Stephen, vii. 37. and it peculiarly identifies his character. Moses delivered the people from bondage by a cloud of miracles ; he instituted the priesthood, and imposed the law with supreme authority ; he talked with his Maker face to face, and his countenance reflected the glory of God. Jesus alone has done the same ; and this prophecy can be referred to none but him.

5. Psalm ii. "Why do the heathen rage, and the people imagine a vain thing? The kings of the earth set themselves, and the rulers take counsel together against the Lord, and against his anointed, saying, let us break their bands asunder, and cast away their cords from us. He that sitteth in the heavens shall laugh; the Lord shall have them in derision. Then shall he speak unto them in his wrath, and vex them in his sore displeasure. Yet have I set my king upon my holy hill of Zion.—Thou art my Son, this day have I begotten thee. Ask of me, and I will give thee the heathen for thine inheritance, and the uttermost parts of the earth for thy possession." This son cannot be Solomon, for he had no war, nor any of David's sons, for their kingdom was very small. But it applies to Christ, the Son, with peculiar fulness and propriety, and it is adduced by St. Paul to prove his godhead, Heb. i. 5. The former part of the psalm expresses the rage of the Jewish and pagan rulers against Christ, and his servants; and the latter the permanency and extent of his kingdom. The psalm closes with an address to the princes of the earth, entreating them to embrace his mercy, lest his long-suffering should turn to anger, and his slighted mercy into terrible vengeance.

6. Psalm xvi. 10, &c. "Thou wilt not leave my soul in hell; neither wilt thou suffer thine Holy One to see corruption." We cannot place this prophecy in a happier view than St. Peter has placed it in the second chapter of the Acts. He proves that David could not speak this of himself, because he slept with his fathers, and saw corruption; but being actuated by a spirit of prophecy, and knowing that God had sworn to raise up of his seed the Messiah, he spake of Jesus, whom God raised up the third day from the dead, and seated at his own right hand.

7. Psalm xxii. "My God! my God! why hast thou forsaken me? I am a worm and no man; a reproach of men, and despised of the people. All that see me laugh me to scorn, they shoot out the lip, they shake the head, saying, he trusted on the Lord, that he would deliver him: let him deliver him, seeing he delighteth in him. They gape upon me with their mouths, as a ravening and a roaring lion. I am poured out like water, and all my bones are out of joint. My tongue cleaveth to my jaws: and thou hast brought me to the dust of death. For dogs have compassed me about, the assembly of the wicked have enclosed me; they have pierced my hands and my feet. I may tell all my bones: they look and stare upon me. They part my garments among them, and cast lots for my vesture.—But be not thou far from me, O Lord! O my strength, haste thee to help me! Save me from the lion's mouth, for thou hast heard me (extricating me) from the horns of the unicorns. I will declare thy name unto my brethren; in the midst of the congregation will I praise thee."

The sacred writings nowhere inform us of David being in this calamitous situation. That the psalm is prophetic, is apparent from the latter part, where it speaks of the conversion of all nations to the worship and kingdom of the Lord. And the former part is obviously applied by the evangelists to the sufferings of Christ, who prayed in this language in the garden, and on the cross. The Jews, like the unruly bulls of Bashan clamoured for his blood, and mocked him at his crucifixion in these very words, Mat. xxvii. 29. 34. His hands and feet were pierced by the nails: and his bones dislocated when the cross was jirked into the rock. The Roman soldiers parted his raiment, and cast lots for his coat; and he made himself known to his brethren after his resurrection from the dead. The

piercing of his hands and feet is more remarkable still; for in that age no such mode of execution was known among the Jews.

8. Psalm xl. 6, 8. "Sacrifice and offering thou didst not desire; mine ears hast thou opened; burnt-offering and sin-offering hast thou not required. Then said I, lo! I come; in the volume of the book it is written of me. I delight to do thy will, O my God! yea thy law is within my heart." This passage is quoted by St. Paul, Heb. x. 5, 6. to prove the insufficiency of the ceremonial sacrifices, which were no more than shadows of the oblation of the body of Christ, which was offered up on the cross once for all. By the one offering of himself he hath for ever perfected them that are sanctified. That is, he hath perfected the atonement which is the cause both of our justification and sanctification through the good pleasure of God.

9. Psalm xlv. "My heart is enditing a good matter (I speak of things which I have made touching the king,) my tongue is as the pen of a ready writer. Thou art fairer than the children of men; grace is poured into thy lips; therefore God hath blessed thee for ever. Gird thy sword upon thy thigh, O most Mighty! with thy glory and thy majesty. And in thy majesty ride prosperously, because of truth, and meekness, and righteousness: and thy right hand shall teach thee terrible things. Thine arrows are sharp in the hearts of the king's enemies, when the people fall under thee. Thy throne, O God, is for ever and ever! the sceptre of thy kingdom is a right sceptre. Thou lovest righteousness and hatest wickedness; therefore God, thy God, hath anointed thee with gladness above thy fellows."—Transporting were the views which the prophet here had of the majesty and grace of Christ; the subjugation or destruction of his foes, and the glory of his immoveable throne. This psalm cannot be

restricted to Solomon, because the epithet, "O God!" is quite too strong; and he had no war.—But when applied to Christ, it is correctly true. Besides, the remaining verses speak of the church as his bride; and add, that he should make his "children princes in all the earth." Now we do not read that Solomon had more than one son who wore a diadem; and his reign, by adhering to rash and inexperienced counsellors was very inauspicious; nor do we read that any of this family ever reigned out of Judea.

10. Psalm lxxviii. 17, 18. "The chariots of God are twenty thousand, even thousands of angels: the Lord is among them as in Sinai, in the holy place. Thou hast ascended on high; thou hast led captivity captive; thou hast received gifts for men; yea, for the rebellious also, that the Lord God might dwell among them." From the Lord's ascension in the cloud from Mount Sinai, the prophet is inspired to contemplate his ascension from Mount Olivet; his triumph over sin, and Satan, and death; and the gifts and graces of the Holy Ghost, which he communicated to the rebellious Jews and Gentiles on their conversion to God. So St. Paul has applied this prophecy, Ephesians iv. 8.

11. The whole of the sixty-ninth psalm is prophetic. From the first to the twenty-second verse, we have a striking description of the innocence and sufferings of Christ. It is too long for insertion here, we shall therefore select those expressions on which the greatest emphasis ought to be placed.—"I sink in deep mire, where there is no standing; I am come into the waters where the floods overflow me. They that hate me without a cause are more than the hairs of mine head; they that would destroy me (being mine enemies wrongfully) are mighty. I am become a stranger unto my brethren, and an alien unto my mother's children. They

that sit in the gate speak against, me, and I was the song of the drunkards. I looked for some to take pity, but there was none ; and for comforters, but I found none. They gave me also gall for my meat, and in my thirst they gave me vinegar to drink. For thy sake I have borne reproach : shame hath covered my face. The zeal of thine house hath eaten me up ; and the reproaches of them that reproached thee have fallen on me." This is obviously an appeal of suffering innocence to the bar of a righteous God. Hence the fifth verse cannot be a confession of folly and sin as it stands in the text, but should be paraphrased thus : " O God, thou knowest whether the accusations of folly be true, or whether I be guilty of the crimes alleged to my charge." Most of the preceding passages are applied to Christ in the New Testament, John ii. 17. xv. 25. xix. 29. Rom. xv. 3.

Ver. 22—28. " Let their table become a snare before them," &c. This is a prophecy of the destruction which should overtake the enemies of Christ. And their table remarkably became a snare to them, when they were gathered to the paschal feast, in the seventieth year of our Lord, and instigated to rebel against the Romans. The three last verses seem to predict the re-establishment of the Jews in the latter day's glory to the church.

12. The seventy-second psalm is a prediction of the glory and extent of the Messiah's kingdom. It may, indeed, be applied to Solomon, who was a type of Christ ; but if restricted to him, the language is highly improper. This will appear by citing a few verses : " He shall come down like rain upon the mown grass ; as showers that water the earth. He shall have dominion also from sea to sea, and from the river to the ends of the earth. Yea, all kings shall fall down before him ; all nations shall serve him. His name shall endure for

ever ; his name shall continue as long as the sun : and men shall be blessed in him ; all nations shall call him blessed." So it shall be in the Messiah's kingdom, when " the knowledge of the Lord shall cover the earth, as waters the sea."

13. Psalm xcv. 7, 11. " To-day if ye will hear his voice, harden not your hearts, as in the day of provocation, and as in the day of temptation in the wilderness ; when your fathers tempted me, proved me, and saw my work. Forty years long was I grieved with this generation, and said, it is a people that do err in their hearts, and they have not known my ways. Unto whom I swear in my wrath, that they should not enter into my rest." This prophecy is copiously illustrated and applied by Saint Paul to the gospel dispensation, Heb. iii. 7, 8. iv. &c. The *day*, has a plain reference to the day of Christ, Isa. xii. 1. Jer. xxiii. 6. Zech. xiii. 1. The *voice*, is God's address to us in the Christian ministry. John, who opened the commission, says, " I am the voice of one crying in the wilderness," &c. The *forty years*, correctly apply to the forty years patience of God, with the hardened Jews, under the gospel dispensation, before he destroyed their sanctuary, and dispersed their nation. The *rest* is heaven, including purity of heart, as the previous qualification for it. God grant that we may not exclude ourselves by hardness and unbelief !

14. Psalm cx. " The Lord said unto my Lord, sit thou at my right hand until I make thine enemies thy footstool. The Lord shall send the rod of thy strength out of Zion : rule thou in the midst of thine adversaries. Thy people shall be willing in the day of thy power, (armies or dominion*) in the beauty of holiness from the womb of the morning :

* So Bishop Reynolds, Dr. Hammond, and Dr. Wall translate it.

thou hast the dew of thy youth. The Lord hath sworn, and will not repent. Thou art a priest for ever after the order of Melchisedeck. The Lord at thy right hand shall strike through kings in the day of his wrath. He shall judge among the heathen; he shall fill the places with the dead bodies; he shall wound the heads over many countries.—He shall drink of the brook by the way; therefore shall he lift up his head.” The ancient Rabbins applied this psalm to the Messiah, and with so much propriety, that the modern Jews cannot evade the application, but by the absurd idea, that it was composed by Abraham’s servant in honor of his master. But this is perverting the title—“A psalm of David.” Besides, the language is altogether too strong to admit of such an interpretation. He never judged the heathen nations, or made war, except to rescue Lot. The whole is a beautiful and striking prediction of the regal and priestly offices of Christ, who according to the whole train of prophecy, will either convert or destroy the nations.*—The last verse is probably expressive of his passion. After having drank the bitter cup, he raised his head from the tomb.

15. Psalm cxviii. 19, 24. “Open to me the gates of righteousness; I will go into them; and I will praise the Lord. This is the gate into which the righteous shall enter. The stone which the builders rejected is become the headstone of the corner. This is the Lord’s doing, and it is marvellous in our eyes. This is the day that the Lord hath made; we will rejoice and be glad.” These are the gates of righteousness and sanctification, which the Lord hath opened to a sinful world, and no man can shut them. Penitent sinners may now enter his spiritual sanctuary, and serve him in holiness and right-

* See Section viii. Article x.

eousness of life. The Scribes and Pharisees were the builders of the Jewish Church, and they rejected the humble Messiah; but God made him the chief corner-stone, when he raised him from the dead, and constituted him head over all things to the church, which is his body, and the fulness of him that filled all in all.

16. In the book of psalms, many prophecies are found respecting the conversion of the Gentiles to the Messiah, and the destruction of his enemies; most of which have been omitted, because of the frequency of their recurrence. There is but one prediction more which shall be considered. It is a very distinguished promise concerning the establishment of the house of David on the throne of Israel for ever. The reader is requested to consult at large Psalm lxxxix. cxxxii. 2 Sam. vii. Ezek. xxxiv. where the Lord covenants with David to build him a sure house, and cause his family to reign before him as long as the sun, the moon, and the heavens shall endure. He remarkably adds, that if his children should offend, he would visit their iniquities with the stripes of sickness, war, and death; but not so as to exterminate the royal line. This covenant, God faithfully kept in view for a thousand years, and through the most afflictive vicissitudes of national disaster, until he had fully accomplished it in the birth of Jesus, who sitteth upon the throne of his father David forever, Luke i. 33. On the death of Ahaziah, Athaliah his mother seized the government, and put to death all the seed-royal, except Joash, an infant, who was concealed in the temple, 2 Chron. xxii. And even after a long captivity of the whole nation, God brought back the royal family, (frequently called by Josephus, the Asmonæan family,) to be princes and governors in Judæa under both the Grecian and Roman monarchies. This instance of God's faithful-

ness, which forms so distinguished a feature in the sacred and Jewish history, affords the most solid consolation to sincere believers; for so will the Lord fulfil all his promises. But affords no licentious hope to actual backsliders, and apostates, that their sins shall be visited merely with bodily stripes. Ahaziah, and Amon, and Jehoahaz, kings of Judea, and many of the princes, were, so far as we can judge, cut off in their sins.

17. Entering now on the book of Isaiah, we find him abound with luminous and elegant predictions; but shall restrict ourselves to those which immediately respect the person of Christ. Chapter the seventh, we have an explicit prediction of his mysterious incarnation. Resin, king of Syria, and Pekah, king of Israel, combined to subvert the throne of David, and they entered Judea with formidable armies. Ahaz king of Judah, and his army, were greatly alarmed; but in the moment of danger, God sent Isaiah, with his infant son Shear-Jashub, to promise them victory, and to renew the promise of the Messiah. As a pledge of its certainty, he bade the king ask a sign. But Ahaz said, "I will not ask a sign, neither will I tempt the Lord." Then said Isaiah, ver. 14. 15. "The Lord himself shall give you a sign: Behold, a virgin shall conceive, and bear a son, and (she) shall call his name Immanuel. Butter and honey shall he eat, that he may know to refuse the evil, and choose the good." He then denounced the punishment of death on the two invaders, which he assured Ahaz should take place before his son Shear-Jashub should know how to choose good and refuse evil.

18. Similar to the above, is the prediction we have, chapter the ninth, concerning the birth, character, and government of Christ. "Unto us a child is born, unto us a son is given, and the government shall be upon his shoulder; and his name shall be

called Wonderful, Counsellor, the Mighty God, the everlasting Father, the Prince of peace. Of the increase of his government and peace there shall be no end, upon the throne of David and his kingdom, to order it and establish it with judgment and justice, from henceforth, and forever; the zeal of the Lord of hosts will perform this." The language of the prophecy is so plain and appropriate, as to supersede the necessity of explication.

19. Isa. xxviii. 16. "Thus saith the Lord God, behold, I lay in Zion for a foundation, a stone—a tried stone—a precious corner-stone—a sure foundation; he that believeth shall not make haste," or be confounded. "Judgment also will I lay to the line, and righteousness to the plummet, and the hail shall sweep away the refuge of lies, and the waters overflow the hiding place." These words are addressed to the haughty rulers of Jerusalem, who ridiculed the judgments of God, and confided in a refuge of lies. The prophet assures them, that God will build a safer sanctuary or refuge, of which Christ is the foundation stone; that the hail, or visitations of God, shall destroy every other refuge; that those who take refuge by faith in the sacred mansion, shall be secure in the day of adversity. Our Lord alluded to this, when he said to Peter, "thou art Cephas," which signifies a stone, "upon this rock," so often mentioned by the prophets, "I will build my church, and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it," Matt. xvi. 18.

20. The whole of the forty-ninth chapter is predictive of the unsuccessful preaching of Christ to the Jews, and of the extensive success his gospel should have among the Gentiles. "Listen, O Isles, unto me, and hearken ye people from afar. The Lord hath called me from the womb, from the bowels of my mother hath he made mention of my name. Then I said, I have laboured in vain, I have

spent my strength for nought, and in vain : yet surely my judgment is with the Lord, and my work with my God. And now, saith the Lord that formed me from the womb, to be his servant, to bring Jacob again to him, though Israel be not gathered, yet shall I be glorious in the eyes of the Lord, and my God shall be my strength. And he said it is a light thing that thou shouldest be my servant to raise up the tribes of Jacob, and to restore the preserved of Israel : I will also give thee for a light to the Gentiles, that thou mayest be salvation to the ends of the earth." We have but to read the gospels, to acknowledge the correct accomplishment of this prophecy. We are told that the Messiah should be glorious in the eyes of the Lord, notwithstanding his unsuccessful mission to the Jews ; that he should succeed among the Gentiles ; and that he should in the issue restore the preserved of Israel, who are now dispersed among the nations.

21. We shall take leave of Isaiah, by a view of the birth, sufferings, and glory of Christ, as predicted in the fifty-third chapter. "He shall grow up before him as a tender plant, and as a root out of dry ground ; and when we see him there is no beauty that we should desire him." A plain indication, that the house of David should be in an abject situation at the birth of Christ ; and destitute of palaces, revenues, and armies, which are so desirable to worldly courtiers.

"He is despised and rejected of men, a man of sorrows and acquainted with grief ; and we hid, as it were, our faces from him ; he was despised, and we esteemed him not. Surely he has borne our griefs, and carried our sorrows ; yet did we esteem him stricken, smitten of God, and afflicted. But he was wounded for our transgressions, he was bruised for our iniquities, and the chastisement of our peace was upon him ; and by his stripes we are

healed. All we, like sheep, have gone astray : we have turned every one to his own way ; and the Lord hath laid on him the iniquity of us all. He was oppressed, and he was afflicted, yet he opened not his mouth ; he is brought as a lamb to the slaughter, and as a sheep before his shearers is dumb, so he opened not his mouth. And he made his grave with the wicked, and with the rich in his death.— Because he had done no violence neither was deceit found in his mouth ; yet it pleased the Lord to bruise him : he hath put him to grief. When thou shalt make his soul an offering for sin, he shall see his seed ; he shall prolong his days, and the pleasure of the Lord shall prosper in his hand," &c. What a portrait of suffering innocence ! Innocence silent when accused, and passive when punished, because we were guilty. How correct and striking is the application of all these expressions to the situation and sufferings of the Son of God ? On the other hand, how perverse are the unbelieving Jews to apply this prophecy to Josiah ; for though it be true, that he was wounded with an arrow, yet he was not born in obscurity ; he was never unpopular and arraigned at the bar of justice. And the last verse can in no sense be applied to him, nor indeed to any one but Christ, who was raised from the dead, spoiled of his enemies, and saw the prosperity of the church. " Therefore will I divide him a portion with the great, and he shall divide the spoil with the strong ; because he poured out his soul unto death."

22. The predictions of Daniel are obviously connected with those of our Lord and St. Paul ; and peculiarly so with those in the book of Revelation. The Assyrian, the Persian, the Grecian, and the Roman monarchies, are represented by four beasts, which successively vanquished one another. Then he speaks of a fifth monarchy, represented by a

stone cut out of the mountain without hands, (and we have noticed already, that Christ is that stone) which brake in pieces the other kingdoms, and became great and filled the earth. See chap. vii.

23. Dan. ix. 24, &c. "O Daniel !" said Gabriel, "seventy weeks are determined upon thy people, and upon thy holy city, to finish transgression—to make an end of sins—and to make reconciliation for iniquity—and to bring in everlasting righteousness—and to seal up the vision of prophecy—and to anoint the most Holy. Know, therefore, and understand, that from the going forth of the commandment to restore and build Jerusalem unto the Messiah the Prince, shall be seven weeks, and three-score and two weeks ; the street shall be built again, and the wall, even in troublous times. And after three score and two weeks shall Messiah be cut off, but not for himself : and the people of the prince that shall come, shall destroy the city, and the sanctuary ; and the end thereof shall be with a flood, and unto the end of the war desolations are determined. And he shall confirm the covenant with many for one week ; and in the midst of the week he shall cause the sacrifice and the oblation to cease, for the overspreading of abominations, he shall make it desolate, even until the consummation, and that determined shall be poured upon the desolate."

This is one of the most distinguished predictions in the Old Testament ; and having the clearest historic evidence of its accomplishment, it equally demonstrates the truth of prophecy, and of the Christian religion. At the expiration of seventy years from the commencement of the captivity of the Israelites, God was pleased to deliver them ; and by the same number of weeks to fix the time when he would effectuate a much greater deliverance, even our redemption from sin by the oblation of Christ.

But the seventy weeks in prophetic language are considered as seventy times seven years. These were to be calculated from the going forth of the commandment to rebuild the city and sanctuary of Jerusalem: not indeed the commandment in the first year of Cyrus, but the edict of Artaxerxes; otherwise, the four hundred and ninety years would not reach to the crucifixion of Christ. Whatever difficulty may occur in the chronological adjustment of these weeks, many of the pious Jews in our Saviour's time really understood them to be accomplished, "and looked for redemption in Israel," Luke ii. 38. Acts. ii. 5. Exclusively of this difficulty, the group of occurrences here predicted needs but little explication. 1. The Messiah was really to be cut off, though guiltless. 2. He was to finish transgression; that is, to expiate sin by the sacrifice of himself. 3. He was to make reconciliation for iniquity; and he has made peace by the blood of the cross. 4. He was to bring in everlasting righteousness; and he has made a sin-offering for us, that we might be made the righteousness of God in him. 5. He was to seal up the vision of prophecy; this he has done by accomplishing whatever was predicted of himself, and by the introduction of a happier dispensation. 6. He was to anoint the most holy; that is, the church, which he has anointed with the graces and gifts of the Holy Spirit.—7. It is said, "He shall confirm the covenant with many;" and he does confirm it with all who believe by giving them a new heart, by making them his sons and daughters, and by remembering their sins no more. 8. The Messiah was to be cut off previously to the destruction of the city and sanctuary; these being both destroyed soon after his passion, demonstrate, in the unconstrained language of prophecy, that he was the Messiah. 9. The sanctuary was to be made desolate, even until the determin-

ed consummation ; this is a luminous fact, the sanctuary is still a desolation ; and when Julian, the apostate Emperor, encouraged the Jews to rebuild it, eruptions of fire caused the workmen to desist.—Vide Socra. Hist. Eccle. Lib. iii. cap. xx.

24. Joel ii. 28, 31. “ And it shall come to pass afterward, that I will pour out my spirit upon all flesh, and your sons and your daughters shall prophecy, your old men shall dream dreams, your young men shall see visions, : and upon the servants and upon the handmaids in those days, will I pour out my spirit. And I will show wonders in the heavens, and in the earth blood and fire, and pillars of smoke. The sun shall be turned to darkness, and the moon into blood, before the great and terrible day of the Lord come.” This prophecy corresponds with another in Isaiah, xliv. 15. and it is applied emphatically by St. Peter to the effusion of the Spirit on the day of Pentecost, Acts ii. nor is there any other period to which it can be applied. Formerly, the gifts of the Spirit had been restricted to prophets and elders, but under the Christian dispensation, the gift is predicted as general, to Jews, proselytes, and Gentiles, of every nation.—It is further announced, that the age should be characterized by persecution, and the greatest national disasters or vengeance of God upon the wicked, which we apprehend to be implied by the blood, vapor and smoke.

25. Hag. ii. 6, 9. “ Thus saith the Lord of Hosts ; yet once, it is a little while, and I will shake the heavens, and the earth, and the sea, and the dry land : and I will shake all nations, and the desire of all nations shall come, and I will fill this house with my glory, saith the Lord of Hosts. The silver is mine, and the gold is mine, saith the Lord of Hosts. And the glory of this latter house shall be greater than the former, saith the Lord of Hosts,

and in this place will I give peace, saith the Lord of Hosts." When the aged Jews saw the plainness and diminutive structure of the second temple compared with the first, they wept. Then the Lord sent Haggai to comfort them with this prediction. The second temple was inferior also to the former in regard to its mystical glory. The Ark of the Covenant, the Tables of the Law, the Manna, the Urim and Thummim, the Holy Fire which fell from heaven, and above all, the Divine glory on the Mercy-Seat, were wanting. It received, however, a far superior glory, when the Lord of Life and Glory entered and exercised his ministry there; and when he put the seal of truth on its mystical services by the oblation of his body, and by becoming the end of the law for righteousness to those who believe. The transient glory of the law was then lost in the unfading glory of Christ. The shaking of all nations coincides with all the other scriptures, which speak of his removing all the obstructions to the spread of the gospel, by the conversion and destruction of unbelievers: then will the Lord give permanent peace to Zion.

Many more prophecies remain, but the explications already given will throw sufficient light upon them. Hence we shall only name some of the most distinguished. Micah predicted Bethlehem as the place of our Saviour's birth, and his prosperous reign as insuring the peace of the land, v. 1, 5.—Zechariah saw his priesthood and kingdom in the figure of a flourishing branch, vi. 12, 13. He saw the inexpressible joy of the disciples, when Jesus rode into Jerusalem, ix. 10. He saw him betrayed for thirty pieces of silver, and the purchase of a field with the money, xi. 12, 13. He saw also the pierced side of the Messiah; the fountain opened for sin and for uncleanness; the shepherd smitten, and the sheep scattered, xiii. 1, 7. Malachi, the

latest of the Jewish prophets, in the canonical scriptures, predicted, in unison with the former prophets, the conversion of the Gentile nations from the rising to the going down of the sun, i. 11. He distinctly predicted the ministry of John as preparatory to the ministry of Jesus, whom he calls Jehovah, and the messenger of the covenant, iii. 1. And he adds, to cheer the persecuted church, that the Sun of Righteousness should arise upon them with healing in his wings, iv. 3. Thus all the holy prophets unite their testimony concerning his sufferings and glory and with increasing evidence, until the baptist could say, "Behold the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world."

It shall be the subject of the two subsequent sections, to show more distinctly the completion of these prophecies, and the mystical significancy of the Jewish law in the life of Christ, and in the first and general spread of the gospel.

SECTION IV.

OF THE INCARNATION—THE MINISTRY—THE DEATH—AND ASCENSION OF OUR BLESSED LORD AND SAVIOUR JESUS CHRIST.

ADAM having violated the first covenant, and involved his whole posterity in ruin, it pleased God to invest the new covenant in surer hands by incarnating his beloved son, that he might perfect our redemption by sustaining our punishment, and vanquish our foes by the power of righteousness. The law had been dishonored by transgression, and it became Jesus to fulfil all righteousness. The holy patriarchs and prophets had carried many virtues to admirable perfection, but they were all tainted with sin; hence we wanted a model of the divine rectitude, that we might be followers of God as dear

children. The ancient institution of sacrificing clean beasts, instructed mankind, that God would not be approached without the shedding of blood; it was requisite that Christ should have a spotless human body, that he might expiate our sin, and vanquish death by the sacrifice of himself. Satan having seduced and depraved our first parents, had reigned as a prince over their apostate and sensual offspring; on this account, it was requisite to vanquish his temptations, and sustain the punishment due to our sins, that the crown and sovereignty might lawfully revert to the Son of God. The dark and depraved race wanted a glorious head and chief, replete with wisdom and grace; they wanted a prince allied to them by consanguinity and covenant, that they might approach him with confidence, and rely on him with assurance for salvation and eternal life. To accomplish all these gracious purposes of the divine wisdom and love, the brightness of the Father's glory, and the express image of his person, veiled his godhead in human nature, and manifested himself to the world.

The time, the manner, and circumstances of our Saviour's nativity, highly accord with his offices and character. The Romans had extended their empire from Britain in the west, to Persia in the east; and proudly enjoyed their conquests in perfect repose. The Jews had many proselytes to their religion almost in every city, and the Greek and Latin languages were in considerable use throughout the world. On these accounts, this was the most favorable era which had occurred in history for the propagation of pure religion.

In this age of imperial peace, the angel Gabriel was sent to Mary, a virgin espoused to Joseph, for God would honor the marriage covenant; and both were of the house and lineage of David. "Hail," said he, "thou that art highly favoured, the Lord is

with thee : blessed art thou among women. And when she saw him, she was troubled at his saying, and cast in her mind what manner of salutation this should be. And the angel said unto her, fear not, Mary ; for thou hast found favor with God. And, behold, thou shalt conceive in thy womb, and bring forth a son, and shalt call his name Jesus. He shall be great ; and shall be called the Son of the Highest ; and the Lord God shall give unto him the throne of his father David ; and he shall reign over the house of Jacob for ever ; and of his kingdom there shall be no end. Then said Mary unto the angel, how shall this be, seeing I know not a man ? And the angel answered, and said unto her, the Holy Ghost shall come upon thee, and the power of the Highest shall overshadow thee ; therefore also that holy thing which shall be born of thee shall be called the Son of God. And, behold, thy cousin Elizabeth, she hath also conceived a son in her old age ; and this is the sixth month with her who was called barren. And Mary said, behold the handmaid of the Lord ; be it unto me according to thy word."

This is the simple but sublime account of our Saviour's incarnation. He took not upon him the nature of angels, but the seed of Abraham, uniting in his adorable person all the incommunicable attributes of JEHOVAH, and all the infirmities of our frail humanity. But though he was made in the likeness of sinful flesh, he was perfectly free from the Adamic corruption, his human substance being sanctified by the Holy Ghost.

St. Paul, in the whole of the first chapter to the Hebrews, demonstrates his character and offices to be appropriate to the Deity only ; and that he is in every view incomparably superior to prophets and angels. " God," says he, " who at sundry times ; and in divers manners, spake in time past unto the fathers by the prophets, hath in these last days spo-

ken unto us by his Son, whom he hath appointed heir of all things, by whom also he made the worlds; who, being the brightness of his glory, and the express image of his person, and upholding all things by the word of his power, when he had by himself purged our sins, sat down on the right hand of the Majesty on high; being made so much better than the angels, as he hath by inheritance obtained a more excellent name than they. For unto which of the angels said he at any time, thou art my son, this day have I begotten thee? And again, I will be to him a Father, and he shall be to me a Son? And again, when he bringeth his first-begotten into the world, he saith, and let all the angels of God worship him."

Similar to this is St. John's account of the divine and human nature of Christ. "In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. The same was in the beginning with God. All things were made by him, and without him was not any thing made that was made. In him was life, and the life was the light of men. And the Word was made flesh and dwelt among us, and we beheld his glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth."—The terms Son, begotten, and God, here applied to Christ, are indeed applicable to creatures; but we are here taught, that they are not applicable to Jesus Christ, either as angel or prophet; being the Creator of men and of all angelic worlds, he is entitled to the adoration of all his creatures. Hence, "to day have I begotten thee," does not mean that Christ was then produced; but that God in our gospel-day announced him to be his beloved Son. These are the *early opinions respecting Christ*, which, by the grace of God, we hope to cherish, till we see him as he is,

I. The incarnation of our Lord was attended with such a series of sacred prodigies, as indicated him to be the character expected by pious men in all nations. His birth was announced to a few poor shepherds in the vicinity of Bethlehem, by a mission of angels ; and to those who waited for redemption in Israel, by the predictions of Simeon and Anna. It was announced to the Magi of Babylon by the phenomenon of a star, and by a delegation of the Magi to the king and rulers of Judea : and that their testimony was believed, is apparent from the slaughter of the infants in Bethlehem.

II. His entrance on the ministry was marked with every qualification proper to demonstrate the divinity of his mission. John was sent to prepare the way, and institute the baptism of water for the remission of sin. This extraordinary man, having been tutored in the wilderness, led an austere and mortified life ; and having his mission immediately from God, he discovered an air of courage and sanctity, which perfectly astonished the multitude of his auditors. His unction, popularity, and success, exceeded every thing the Jewish nation had attested since the days of Elijah. He laid a good foundation, and then referred his disciples to his adorable master, who should raise and complete the superstructure of his holy temple.

III. No sooner was John imprisoned, than Jesus succeeded him ; and the opening of his ministry was as the radiance of the morning, and all his gracious words as the application of balm to the wounded conscience. He corrected the gross and absurd interpretations of the law with sovereign authority, and instructed the multitudes in the perfection of every virtue. He taught them to forgive injuries whenever solicited ; to overcome evil with good ; to love one another, to subdue every inordinate passion, to vanquish the love of this world, and

to lay up for themselves treasure in heaven. These are the only doctrines capable of restoring peace to a dissipated mind, and concord to a disordered world.

IV. In disclosing the nature and happiness of his heavenly kingdom, he condescended to human weakness, and communicated the sublimest wisdom in the utmost simplicity of language. By the innocence and artless conversation of children, and by the secret fermentation of leaven, he illustrated the nature and progress of regeneration. By the fruitfulness of fields and vines, he showed what his disciples ought to be in works of piety and works of mercy. By Lot's wife, the prodigal son, and the inconsiderate architect, he exemplified the sin and danger of apostacy. By the separation of the tares from the wheat, the sheep from the goats, and the wise from the foolish virgins, he announced the final separation of the righteous from the wicked. By a nobleman's return to his country and calling his servants to an account, he strikingly illustrated the manner of his second coming, and the rewards and punishments which await the world. In a word, by a princely banquet, by fountains and rivers of water, and by the joy of a family on a master's return, he disclosed the happiness and pleasures of the life to come. Thus, by objects and customs well known to the people, he communicated celestial doctrines, which they did not know. There is more propriety in this kind of instruction, because the objects being familiar, we are ever reminded of what we should never forget. Thus, although our Saviour could not directly avail himself, like the apostles, of arguments drawn from his death and resurrection, yet he admirably does in figurative language.

If the parables of Jesus be compared with the pagan fables, we are presented with a striking view of the advantages which revelation has over human

reason. The fables certainly lay open the nature of vice and virtue, in a plain and instructive manner; but they fail in prescribing the proper remedies.— Sometimes they recommend us to conquer vice by courage, prudence, or policy; and sometimes they applaud revenge. Jesus not only exposed vice in a proper manner, but he prescribed the remedy, by enjoining his disciples to aspire at the perfection of every virtue. He illustrated the delays of providence, and the unequal distribution of good and evil, by the doctrine of a future state; and by referring all our hopes to that happier world, he elevated the soul to God, and made it a partaker of divine repose.

V. His manner of improving circumstances discovered an ease and propriety equally worthy of his character and of our imitation. Discoursing with the woman of Samaria concerning water, he turned the conversation to the living waters so often mentioned in the prophets; and when she mentioned the disputes between the Jews and Samaritans, concerning the place of external worship, he referred her to that worship which is in spirit and in truth. When he saw the multitudes thronging the wide gates, he took occasion to exhort them to enter in at the straight gate of regeneration, which leadeth unto life. The seditious multitude which followed him because of the loaves and fishes, and would have made him king, he exhorted to labor for the meat which endureth to eternal life, and withdrew himself from them; as we should cautiously do whenever we fall into seditious and atheistical company. Also, when he saw the worshippers very thirsty in the temple, he invited them to come unto him, and drink of the waters which flowed from the spiritual rock. His admonitions and criticisms were always strikingly just, and his public disputations so conclusive, as to cover his opponents with confusion, and create veneration for his character.

VI. The divinity of our Saviour's works corresponded with the sublimity of his words, and with all those exalted ideas we entertain of the divine munificence. The holy prophets when communicating their revelations, were jealous to give all the glory to the Lord. In the Pentateuch, we read that "the Lord spake to Moses;" and the prophets introduced their revelations with, "thus saith the Lord." Our divine Master spake not as a servant, but as a Son. He came from the bosom of the Father, and acted with supreme authority. Correcting the false interpretation of the law by the Rabbins, he expresses himself as the sovereign lawgiver. "It hath been said by them of old time, thou shalt love thy neighbour and hate thine enemy; but I say unto you, love your enemies, bless them that curse you, and pray for them that despitefully use you and persecute you." If objected, that Elijah raised up the dead, he rectifies the error by intimating that the Lord wrought the work in answer to Elijah's prayer.—"As the Father raiseth up the dead, and quickeneth them, even so the Son quickeneth whom he will. As the Father hath life in himself, so hath he given the Son to have life in himself," John v. 21. This was making the proper distinction between the servants and the Son.

VII. A man publishing the laws of heaven in majestic language, and deciding on questions but imperfectly known to the prophets, certainly ought to substantiate his mission by divine works. Besides, those who were open to conviction, and ready to embrace the truth, had not sufficient time to try the effects of the gospel on society. On these accounts it was really requisite that miracles should, for a while, accompany the Christian ministry. Accordingly, when modest or urgent occasions offered, and when the distressed solicited relief by faith, the blind saw—the deaf heard—the lame walked—the

sick were cured—the lepers were cleansed—demoni-
acs delivered—and the dead were raised up.

In the creation, “God spake and it was done; he
commanded and it stood fast. By the word of the
Lord the heavens were made, and the hosts of them
by the breath of his mouth,” Psalm xxxiii. 6. Just
so, when the same word was made flesh, he spake,
and the stormy winds and seas were calmed at his
rebuke—the fishes of the deep assembled at his se-
cret call—the hungry multitudes were fed with a
trivial quantity of bread—yea,

“The modest water, aw’d by pow’r divine,
Confess’d its God, and blushing, turn’d to wine.”

Thus every creature, whether animate or inani-
mate, did him homage as the God of nature, and
obeyed him as the ruler of the universe.

The number, variety, and magnitude of our
Lord’s miracles were too great to admit of mistake,
and too openly performed to be capable of decep-
tion. They are attested by enemies as well as by
friends. Among the Jews, Josephus and the Tal-
mud, and among the heathen, Celsus and Julian,
however incautiously, bear their testimony to the
miraculous powers of Christ.

Some of these miracles, it is granted, he wrought
by the ministry of holy angels, and some by the
ministry of demons, as when he destroyed the swine
of the Gadarenes. Satan solicited power to do this
evil that he might prejudice the people against the
gospel, and our Lord permitted it, as he permits
other evils, that they might be either hardened or
humbled under the mighty hand of God.

After all these miracles, the perverse rulers of
Israel still demanded of the Saviour, some further
sign of his mission, or proof that God had sent him:
probably, some such visible appearance of the di-
vine glory as they had been accustomed to while the

tabernacle and first temple stood. The Lord rebuking their incredulity, declared, that he would give them a sign, but it should be the sign of his resurrection to their utter confusion ; that as Jonah was raised up from the deep, so should the Son of man be raised up the third day from the dead.

On the subject of miracles the enemies of Christianity have no alternative, but either to acknowledge them to be wrought by the Holy Spirit, or by the power of demons ; for they have already acknowledged their existence. To human power they cannot be ascribed ; and, “ if Satan cast out Satan, how shall his kingdom stand ? ” Our Lord knowing that the Pharisees ascribed them to Beelzebub, the prince of devils, and foreseeing that the heathen would ascribe them to magic, took occasion to denounce the most dreadful punishment against so presumptive a crime. “ All sins,” said he, “ shall be forgiven unto the sons of men, and blasphemies wherewith soever they shall blaspheme ; but he that shall blaspheme against the Holy Ghost hath never forgiveness, but is in danger of eternal damnation ; because they said, he hath an unclean spirit,” Mark iii. 22—30.

VIII. The personal virtues of our blessed Lord conferred the highest honor on human nature, and on his ministerial character. In the commencement of his discourse on the mount, he discovered his compassion by promising the kingdom of heaven to the poor in spirit, and comfort to the mourners. He had compassion on the desolate widow of Nain, and raised her only son from the dead. In order that the Jews might believe, he wept with the sisters of Lazarus, and restored their brother to life, though he had been dead four days. He was a physician to the sick, and the friend of penitent publicans and sinners. The disciples, who wept when he told of his departure, he comforted with a series of promis-

es concerning his peace and presence, which he would ever afford them ; and concerning the comforter, and his own assured return to receive them to glory. The reviving tidings of his resurrection he sent to backslidden Peter by name ; and when giving a ministerial charge to that apostle, after his restoration, the lambs of the flock were first recommended to his pastoral care. In a word, his meekness and humility, his piety and diligence, his patience and resignation, discovered a glory altogether worthy of our incarnate God.

When undeceiving the multitudes with regard to their hopes of his becoming a temporal prince, he discovered the utmost frankness and undisguised sincerity. He could not, for a moment, suffer them to remain under the fond but fatal delusion. "If any man," said he, "will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross daily, and follow me. Whosoever will save his life shall lose it ; but whosoever will lose his life for my sake and the gospel's, the same shall save it." May we all learn of this divine Saviour to lay the axe in like manner to the root of every vice.

In Jerusalem, and some other cities, in which his ministry and miracles too were wholly rejected, he used the utmost endeavours to remove their prejudice, and conciliate their affections. Against his miracles, the priests and rulers could bring no objection ; but they objected to him as a wicked man, because he wrought some of them on the Sabbath day. To remove this prejudice, our Lord compared their public conduct with his own : when he healed the man with a withered hand, he observed, that it was as lawful for him to loose that man, as for them to loose a beast, and lead him to water. Likewise, when he healed the man at the pool, who had been lame for eight and thirty years, he observed, that they performed the operation of circumcision on

the Sabbath; consequently, that it was as lawful for him to heal, as for them to wound on that day. But all these arguments made but a momentary impression on their ancient prejudices in favour of a regal Messiah; they would neither receive him as a good man nor a prophet; and when he asserted his existence previous to Abraham, they took up stones to cast at him.

It was wholly with a view to remove prejudice, prevent civil commotion, and promote usefulness, that he concealed his divine character from the world. When entering on his ministry, he told no one who he was, but rather let his words and works gradually disclose his mission and character. His disciples, indeed, believed on him, as the promised Messiah, from the beginning; but the consideration of his humble condition allayed their joys, and deferred their hopes of a temporal kingdom. It was not till the second year of his ministry, while going to Cesarea, that he confirmed their faith in him as the Son of God, or the Messiah; but at the same time he charged them to tell no man. Also, in a village of Samaria, in which there was no danger of exciting the jealousy of the Jewish rulers, he frankly avowed his character, and confirmed it by divine evidences. This admirable prudence of Jesus, in appearing as an extraordinary prophet only, secured the protection of his disciples, and removed every obstruction to the conversion of those factions which composed the Jewish church and polity.

IX. After the imprisonment and martyrdom of John, the eyes of the pious Jews were turned to Jesus. Knowing the seventy weeks of Daniel to be accomplished, it was their general expectation, that the Messiah would *now* appear;* hence considera-

* *Percrebuerat oriente toto vetus et constans opinio, esse in futus Judæâ profecti rerum potirentur.*

SUET.

Pluribus persuasio inerat, antiquis sacerdotum libris contin-

ble numbers of the people, and some of the chief rulers, believed on him. But the nation at large was otherwise disposed. Accustomed to hear the Rabbins apply those predictions, which speak of the Messiah's sufferings, to afflicted princes; and those which speak of his spiritual kingdom, to the splendor of his temporal reign in Jerusalem, they altogether rejected the humble-preaching Saviour.

Besides, our blessed Lord's popularity as a preacher, and his wisdom and sanctity as a man and a prophet, were insupportable to the priestly rulers. They endeavoured on every occasion, and by every means, to lay hold of him; and, if possible, to put him to death. The few distinguished miracles he wrought in Jerusalem had no effect but to increase their calumnies, and confirm their malice. So were they disposed towards him when the resurrection of Lazarus brought their counsel to a crisis; that is, to put him to death as soon as they could apprehend him. This miracle was so luminous, and had such an effect in removing prejudice, and in converting many in Jerusalem, that the chief priests took up the fact in the most serious manner, and substituted policy for justice. "If we let him thus alone," said they, "all men will believe on him; and the Romans (deeming his congregations insurrections) shall come and take away both our place and nation." By this decision, they horridly agreed to bring upon themselves the blood of the Holy and Just One. But Jesus did not commit himself into their hand, because his hour was not come.

X. After this, and indeed after a preceding conspiracy, Jesus prudently withdrew from the cantons of *Jewry*, and confined his labors to Galilee

ri eo ipso tempore fore, ut valesceret oriens profectique Judææ rerum potirentur.
TACIT.

and the sea-coast, because his work was not yet accomplished. He sent the twelve, and afterwards the seventy disciples, into all the cities and villages he intended to visit, that the people might be excited to look for the kingdom of God immediately. Having now manifested himself as an extraordinary prophet, and in many respects as the Messiah, to the whole Jewish nation; having laid the foundation of his infant church, and adequately provided for its ministry, every object of his prophetic mission was fully accomplished: he therefore hastened to Jerusalem, that he might put away sin by the sacrifice of himself. But oh! when he beheld the city, recollecting its privileges, attesting its crimes, and foreseeing its punishment, he wept and lamented over it. "O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, thou that killest the prophets, and stonest them which are sent unto thee, how often would I have gathered thy children together, even as a hen gathereth her chickens under her wings, and ye would not!—If thou hadst known, even thou, at least in this thy day, the things which belong unto thy peace, but now they are hid from thine eyes.—Thine enemies shall cast a trench about thee, and shall lay thee even with the ground, because thou knewest not the time of thy visitation," Luke xix. 41. Matt. xxiii. 37. We learn from this elegiac prediction, that the sinners in Jerusalem had a day of grace, or time of visitation; and that this invaluable moment was past from the time they wickedly rejected the ministry and miracles of Jesus Christ, and in particular the resurrection of Lazarus. How amazing is the long-suffering of God, to spare men to such a height of depravity! How unsearchable are his wisdom and judgments, that he should employ reprobates in the accomplishment of prophecy respecting the crucifixion of his Son!

XI. Of this tragic event, he began to apprise the disciples on such occasions, and in such expressions, as were best suited to their feelings and situation : for they did not expect their master to be crucified on Calvary, but to reign in Jerusalem. As Providence generally conceals our troubles till they come, or till their near approach, so Jesus was pleased to conceal this catastrophe from his disciples, that their sorrow might speedily be turned to joy. It was not till his last journey to that incorrigible city, that he acquainted them plainly with the circumstances of his death and resurrection. "The Son of man," said he, "must be rejected of the high priests and elders, crucified, and rise again the third day."—When Mary anointed his head, he said, "she hath done it unto my burial;" indicating that God had prompted her to an excess in civility, which she could not then account for. In the guest-chamber he disclosed to his disciples almost every circumstance of his departure, being improper to conceal it a moment longer; and he endeavoured to reconcile their minds to his exit, by a variety of impressive and suitable arguments. "Except," said he, "a corn of wheat fall into the ground and die, it abideth alone, but if it die, it bringeth forth fruit. If I go not away, the Comforter will not come; but if I go, I will send him. I go and prepare a place for you, and if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again and receive you to myself."

It may be here remarked, that these predictions of Christ are as demonstrative of his godhead as his miracles. Indeed, the greater part of his ministry was one continued series of predictions respecting the success of the gospel, the rewards of the righteous, and the punishments of the wicked. His predictions respecting the destruction of Jerusalem we should particularly notice, because their striking completion is confirmed by the fullest historic evi-

dence. That perverse and incorrigible city had ever rejected the word of the Lord, and killed the prophets; therefore he infatuated them to their own destruction. The prominent circumstances of this destruction were minutely detailed by our Lord.—He said, that the enemy should surround them as eagles gather about their prey; that the horrors of the seige should be incomparably severe; that those who should be happy, or rather wretched enough to survive the dreadful calamity, should be led away captive to all nations. He, lastly, provided for the safety of his church, by warning the disciples to flee to the mountains on the approach of the hostile armies. There are two other remarkable circumstances which he predicted, and which were not accomplished when Titus suppressed the Jewish rebellion in the seventieth of Christ, but they were accomplished in the next rebellion, viz. that the foundation of the temple should be razed, and that Jerusalem should be trodden down of the Gentiles, until the times of the Gentiles should be fulfilled. The reader need only compare the twenty-first chapter of Saint Luke with the Jewish history, to trace the prophetic character and amazing wisdom of Jesus Christ. May he ever deign, of his great mercy, to guide us by that wisdom, and may we ever be preserved from danger, like his first disciples, by attending to his word!

XII. Six days before the passover, at which our Lord was crucified, he arrived at Bethany, and supped with Lazarus, and his two sisters, Mary and Martha. After supper Mary anointed Jesus with a box of precious ointment, which caused Judas to murmur. His friends in the city, with many of the populace, hearing of his arrival, came out next morning to meet him, for the resurrection of Lazarus had induced many to believe on him. Jesus accompanied them into the city, riding on an ass's colt;

and these being met by a multitude still coming to meet him, the joy of his disciples became so great, that it could not be contained. They cut down branches of trees, as emblems of peace and joy, spread their garments for his beast to tread upon, and sung hosannas to him, as the son of David, and the king of Israel. The Pharisees, alarmed at these divine and regal honours, entreated him to repress them; but he would not, it being meet that the children of Zion should rejoice, and for once do homage to their king, Zech. x.

His stay in Jerusalem was but for a night or two; for he returned to Bethany again. And two days before the passover he supped with Simon the leper, one of the chief rulers.

XIII. We shall now retire with Jesus to the guest-chamber, and see the last moments of him who is the source of all wisdom, and the model of every virtue. After supping with his disciples, he gave Judas a sop, and dismissed him, and then by prayer and thanksgiving consecrated bread and wine, as the sacred memorials of his passion and death.* All nations have celebrated illustrious deeds, and great events of a beneficent nature, by some exterior memorials of festivity and honour. Providence, in the religious economy, has done the same. The covenant with Abraham received the seal of circumcision; the deliverance from Egypt was annually celebrated by the feast of the passover; in the introduction of the gospel, the baptism of water was imposed on all believers, as a badge of their faith and purity. Agreeably to these institutions, our Lord took bread, and blessed, and brake it, saying,

* Two of the evangelists mention the sacrament as previous to the sop; but on several occasions they are more solicitous of truth than of order. And as the sop is presumed to be a part of the supper, Mr. Pool is decidedly of opinion, that Judas was not present at the holy sacrament.

“take, eat; this is my body, which is given for you. In like manner he took the cup, and when he had given thanks, he said, drink ye all of this—this is my blood of the New Testament which is shed for you, for the remission of sins: do this in remembrance of me.” This solemn and sacred ordinance he enlivened by such discourse concerning the glory and happiness of heaven; his mediation with the Father; his future advent; and the offices and grace of the Comforter, as charmed and edified his weeping disciples. He then sung a hymn, and retired to the garden of Gethsemane, his occasional place of devotion.

XIV. On entering the garden, he withdrew about a stone's cast from his disciples, and falling down on his knees, began to ask life and salvation for a guilty world. And oh! tremendous to say! justice could remit no part of the punishment—the innocent or the guilty must die. Justice could remit no part, even to the beloved Son, though his shrinking humanity deprecated the bitter cup: therefore he said, “Father, not as I will, but as thou wilt.” Hereupon his righteous soul sustained the whole anguish of our iniquities, which it pleased the divine justice to transfer to him. “The sorrows of death compassed him about, and the pains of hell got hold upon him.” Three times he prostrated and prayed; and three times he rose in the conflict. So great was his agony, that the blood mixing with the perspiration, fell in large drops to the earth. But, although the severest part of the passion probably did not exceed an hour; yet, when the innocence and dignity of the sufferer are considered, it was a far more luminous display of the divine justice than can be made by the everlasting punishment of those who reject the everlasting happiness and life presented in Christ Jesus.

XV. Jesus, waking his sleeping disciples, went forward and discovered his person to the armed multitude, who were entering the garden to apprehend him. So alarmed were the chief priests and rulers at the increasing popularity of Jesus, and so intent were they on his destruction, that on the information of Judas, they convened an extraordinary assembly, and continued their sitting the whole night. The council, gratified by a sight of the prisoner, were embarrassed for evidence which would effect his life: they sought for false witnesses, but found none to their purpose. Many, indeed, appeared against him, but their accusations were not of a seditious nature; they concerned some of his religious expressions misunderstood. This embarrassment being insupportable, the high priest, contrary to every principle of judicature, adjured him by the living God to say, whether he was the Christ. To this solemn requisition our blessed Lord gave a full and positive answer, that hereafter they should see him on the clouds of heaven, with power and great glory; that is, they should see him as Moses and Israel saw him, on Mount Sinai; or as they themselves had wantonly solicited, when they demanded, in addition to that of miracles, a sign of his being the Messiah. This was enough: the high priest rent his garments at the presumed blasphemy; and sent away Jesus to be judged and condemned by Pilate, the Roman governor. The whole council and their party followed to accuse him. Pilate, seeing the chief priests and rulers at the gates, requested that they would try the prisoner according to their law. They replied in vehement accusations, that he disseminated seditious principles through all Jewry, and dissuaded the people from paying tribute; that he had assumed regal titles, and but five days before had received homage as a prince on his entrance into Jerusalem. They added further, that by their law he ought to

die, and that they had not power to inflict the punishment. Impressed by these charges, and by the silence of Jesus, Pilate took him aside, and demanded who he was; whether he were a king, and what he had done. Jesus frankly acknowledged, that he was born to be a king, and came into the world to bear witness of the truth of his mission, but that his kingdom was not of this world. Satisfied with this reply, Pilate affirmed to the priests that he could not find the charges of sedition substantiated. They then brought forward the charge of blasphemy, that Jesus had entitled himself the Son of God. The governor, awed by hearing this, and by a note he received from his lady, requesting him to have nothing to do with that righteous man, on account of what she had dreamed concerning him the preceding night, perceived that the whole was a religious concern, and that the chief priests had accused him through envy. From that instant he endeavoured to deliver Jesus by every effort of policy, instead of doing it by the dignified courage of a governor. He said, "I will chastise him, and let him go." The priests and rulers, alarmed lest Christ should escape, became outrageous, and used strong words. "If thou let this man go," said they, "thou art not Cæsar's friend: whosoever maketh himself a king, speaketh against Cæsar." Pilate's fears were now addressed by the menace of an appeal to Rome; for it was again alleged, that Jesus, throughout Galilee and Jewry, had excited the people to sedition. Hearing that Jesus was a native of Gallilee, governed by Herod, who was then in Jerusalem, Pilate hoped to have extricated himself from the business, by sending him to be judged by his own prince. But Herod and his courtiers, unable to extort a word from Jesus, wantonly derided him, and sent him back to Pilate. This weak and wicked prince, instead of extricating the Saviour, as Lysias extri-

cated St. Paul, ineffectually attempted his release, by availing himself of the custom of gratifying the people at the feast, by the release of a prisoner. He made the appeal in person; but the chief priests having influenced them to prefer a murderer, the vociferations were, "not this man, but Barabbas."

XVI. Jesus was now delivered to be scourged, according to the custom of the Romans; and the soldiers having heard the false accusations, that he had aspired to regal dignity, platted a crown of thorns, and placed it on his head; a purple robe was procured, in which he was arrayed; a reed was substituted for a sceptre, and placed in his hand. They then bowed the knee, and paid him homage as the king of Israel. Others hearing that he was a prophet, covered his eyes, and smiting him, said, "prophecy, who smote." But God converted these indignities into real honours, by supporting him with victorious patience; by speedily raising him from the dead, and investing him with the sceptre of universal dominion.

When the person of Jesus now exhibited the extreme of mockery and misery, Pilate exposed him to the people, probably hoping to excite their compassion: but they still cried for Barabbas. "What then," said he, "shall I do with Jesus?" They cried, "crucify him! crucify him!" "What," said he, "shall I crucify your king?" They replied, "we have no king but Cæsar." He then took water and washed his hands, affirming that he was innocent of his blood: and oh! how dreadful to add, this infatuated crowd dared even the vengeance of heaven: "His blood," said they, "be upon us and upon our children!"

Jesus being sentenced to the cross, was instantly led away to Calvary, and crucified between two thieves amid the insults of his foes, and the tears of his friends. The chief priests and rulers followed

with the crowd, to feast their eyes with his sufferings, and to excite the multitude to deride him. "They wagged their heads, saying, he saved others, himself he cannot save. If he be the Christ, let him come down from the cross, and we will believe him." This extreme of depravity was never exceeded but by the piety of Jesus, who said, "Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do."

About the ninth hour, his suffering humanity made its last complaint—"My God! my God! why hast thou forsaken me?" Knowing now, that every minutæ of the prophecies respecting his death was accomplished, and that atonement was made for the sins of the world, he said, "IT IS FINISHED!" and taught us how to die by commending his spirit into the hands of the Father.

The sun for three hours veiled himself in sackcloth, and refused to see the deed. The earth trembled beneath its guilty inhabitants. The rocks rent; many of the saints arose from their graves, and appeared to their friends in Jerusalem. Many of the populace were undeceived. There is no hypocrisy in death. It is scarcely possible for a man who prayed for his crucifiers to be an impostor; or for one, who with his last breath could commend his spirit to God, to be a wicked person. "Truly," said the centurion, "this man was the Son of God."

O! most gracious Father, what a tragic, but instructive scene is here disclosed! Significantly, indeed, was the veil of the temple rent from the top to the bottom. The mangled body of that spotless lamb, covered with gore, discloses the mystic reference of all the sin offerings. This Calvary, without the gate; and that cross, streaked and sprinkled with blood, show the pre-signification of the red heifer, slain without the camp, and the sprinkling of its blood upon the veil. It is I and my fel-

low-worms who have sinned; our crimes have pierced his body, and nailed it to the tree; but he suffered to put our sin away. Ah! this is the curse, and this is the death our crimes have merited; but he died that we might live. We see now of whom Isaiah spake in these elegiac words: "He was wounded for our transgressions, and bruised for our iniquities. He was led as a lamb to the slaughter; and as a sheep before his shearers is dumb, so he opened not his mouth." O! may we look on him whom we have pierced; and mixing our sorrows with his, may we die to sin as he died for sin; that being planted in the likeness of his death, we may be also in the likeness of his resurrection.

XVII. Jesus was interred in a new sepulchre, which Joseph of Arimathea had hewed out of a rock for himself. Here the sacred body, after its hard conflicts, reposed till the third day, that the reality of the Saviour's death might be recognised; that the dark abode might be cheered: and the grave constituted the softest bed on which saints ever slept. Here also, with worldly historians, the scene closes in the shades of oblivion; but with Jesus Christ, the period is yet to come. Having spoiled the powers of darkness on the cross, and vanquished death by making his soul an offering for sin, he could not be detained in the tomb. The payment of the ransom emancipates the captive: therefore, the angel of the Lord descended and rolled away the stone and the conqueror arose from the dead, and assumed his kingdom and immortal glory.

The poor heart broken-disciples, till revived by the tidings of their master's resurrection, were covered with a sable gloom of pensive grief. But, as mariners when cast on reefs of rock in a dark night, and give up life and all for lost, are elated with joy to find themselves safely floated by the morning tide, "so were the disciples glad when they saw

the Lord." They then perfectly understood his words—"Ye shall have sorrow, but your sorrow shall be turned into joy." And even in the depth of their gloom and grief, their integrity preserved them from shame. Two of them said to the supposed stranger, "we trusted it had been he which should have redeemed Israel."

Immediately after the resurrection, Jesus hasted to comfort his weeping friends, particularly Mary and Peter, whose sorrows were extreme. For forty days he employed himself in these consolatory offices, and in elucidating the types and prophecies of the Old Testament, which allude to his sufferings and entrance into glory. But some doubted, and others were afraid. To these he said, "handle me, for a spirit hath not flesh and bones, as ye see me have." Having thus seen the Lord, they were constituted faithful witnesses of his resurrection, and being anointed by his Spirit, were made able ministers of the New Testament.

XVIII. Great was the joy in the habitations of the righteous, because the right hand of the Lord had done valiantly, and brought mighty things to pass: but the most sublime and encouraging transaction yet remained to be achieved. It was not proper for the immortal God, for whom all things were created, to fix his permanent residence in this sinful and temporary world. Therefore, on the fortieth day after the resurrection, he conducted his disciples to Mount Olivet, not far from the garden where he sustained the dreadful conflict; and having given them final instructions he stretched forth his hands and blessed them. Then the conqueror of sin, and death, and hell, ascended triumphantly to heaven. The disciples beheld when their master was taken up, and followed him with their eyes and hearts, till a cloud received him out of their sight. They continued looking, with indescribable emo-

tions, till two angels, who seem to have been left behind as their guardians, comforted them with the only promise which could comfort them; that their adorable and identical Lord should so return as they had seen him go into heaven.

O my soul! what a scene of glorious triumph is here presented to thy view! See the God—the man—and thy Redeemer, lead captivity captive, and cast the trackless orbits of the comets, and all the celestial spheres, far beneath his feet! See him attended with cherubim and seraphim, receive the homage of myriads of suns and worlds as he rides through the starry heavens, which are but the dark concave of the purer regions, or the illuminations which surround the temple of uncreated glory.—Hear this triumphant choir celebrate his victories with harps and trumpets, songs and shouts. Hear his princely herald surprise the thrones of heaven with a voice of thunder—“Lift up your heads, O ye gates! and be ye lift up, ye everlasting doors, and the King of Glory shall come in! Who is the King of Glory? JEHOVAH—strong and mighty!—JEHOVAH of armies—he is the King of Glory! Lift up your heads, O ye gates! and be ye lift up, ye everlasting doors, and the King of Glory shall come in.” See the entrance of our Immanuel into the glory he had with the Father, before the world existed. See his immortalized humanity seated at the right hand of majesty, and invested with supreme authority both in heaven and in earth, which is the pledge and model of our future glory, when he shall come again to receive us to himself. See all heaven attracted by his glory, surround the throne to acquaint themselves with the redemption of man. See the sealed book of providence presented in the Father’s right hand; but no one is able—no one is worthy to take the book and unloose the seals! See, after a silence and a solemn

pause, the Lion and Prince of Judah's line, boldly take the book, and enter on his high functions of mediator with God and judge of man! See all the shining crowds on the occasion prostrate before the throne, strike their golden harps, and make the vaulted heavens resound with the new song of redeeming love, in which every creature ascribes equal blessing and honour, and glory, and power, to him that sitteth upon the throne, and to the Lamb for ever and ever! Haste then, O my soul! to join thy devotion to theirs. Haste to adore him on earth as he is adored in heaven, that thou mayest be counted worthy at his coming to be received into his eternal joy!

SECTION V.

THE FIRST AND GENERAL SPREAD OF THE GOSPEL.

KEEPING our eye stedfastly fixed on the golden chain of man's salvation, we shall next turn our views to the blessed apostles, and see them build the church of the living God upon Jesus Christ, the sure foundation, and according to the doctrine of the holy prophets. Conformably to their master's instructions, they waited ten days at Jerusalem for the gift of the Holy Ghost, which was deferred till the feast of Pentecost, that it might correspond with the type, the Lord's descent on Mount Sinai to promulge the law on the fiftieth day after the deliverance from Egypt. It was deferred also that the Jews, proselytes, and strangers, who came up to the feast from every province of the empire, might hear the gospel in their native language.

I. Early in the morning the apostles and brethren were assembled for prayer, about one hundred and twenty in number. And suddenly the Holy Ghost descended with a sound like a tremendous tempest;

his glory filled the whole house, and sat upon each of them, as cloven tongues of fire, expressive of the numerous languages he instantaneously enabled them to speak. Endowed with this unction, and with these qualifications, they distributed themselves in the streets, preaching Jesus, the true Messiah, as the Spirit gave them utterance. Thus the cloud of the divine glory, which appeared at the dedication of the tabernacle and the temple, came now and rested on his living temple, to replenish and adorn his saints with grace, and dwell with them for ever.

The devout Jews and proselytes, who were strangers, attended to the Christian preachers with candor and reverence. But the natives, not understanding these languages, nor knowing for what end they were given, mocked and traduced the preachers as intoxicated with wine. Peter perceiving this, stood up among the greatest concourse, and animadverted on the absurdity of the alleged intoxication, because it was too early an hour in the day. He assured them, that this really was the effusion of the Spirit, and the preaching spoken of by the prophet Joel. He then identified the person of Jesus to be the true Messiah, by surprising and copious applications of prophecy. He proved his resurrection from the testimony of David—“Thou wilt not leave my soul in hell, nor suffer thine Holy One to see corruption.” He adduced the positive and unequivocal evidences they had of the resurrection and ascension of their adorable master. He lastly applied his sermon in these piercing words: “Therefore, let all the house of Israel know assuredly, that this same Jesus, whom ye by wicked hands have crucified and slain, is both Lord and Christ. And when they heard this, they were pricked in the heart, and said unto Peter, and the rest of the apostles, men and brethren, what

shall we do?" In answer to their piercing inquiries, he promised pardon, in the first place, to every penitent: and in the second, he promised the higher endowments of the Spirit to as many of them and their children as the Lord should think proper to call to that ministry. The effect of this day's ministry was the conversion of three thousand persons. They gladly received the word, were baptized, and sealed with the gift of the Holy Ghost.

II. In a day or two after, Peter and John, going to worship in the temple, healed a lame man, who sat begging at the beautiful gate. This attracted the surrounding crowd, who seemed to have looked on the apostles with more than human reverence. Peter embraced this happy occasion of magnifying the name of his crucified master, and five thousand more were converted by this distinguished miracle and powerful sermon.

The whole of this infant church was filled with the Holy Ghost; their sensations of pardon, peace, and joy, were inexpressible; and their simplicity, purity, and devotion indicated the heaven which inspired their bosom. "They continued stedfast in the apostles' doctrine, and fellowship, and in breaking of bread, and in prayer." The Apostles and their fellow-labourers being now endowed with the higher gifts of the Spirit, "the word of faith," to preach the mystery of the gospel, and "the word of knowledge" to expound the scriptures, announced the resurrection of Jesus Christ with surprising courage, and confirmed it by working miracles in his name. Hence great fear fell upon the rulers who had crucified him; and when they had apprehended the apostles, they durst not detain them more than a single night. "And all that believed were together, and had all things common. Neither were there any among them that lacked; for as many as were possessed of houses or land sold them, and brought

the money to the apostles, and distribution was made to the indigent brethren, as every man had need. And they continued daily with one accord in the temple, and breaking bread from house to house, did eat their meat with gladness and singleness of heart, praising God, and having favour with all the people. And the Lord added unto the church daily such as were saved from sin by regeneration."

This divine work having broken out at the feast, the converted worshippers returning home instantly communicated it to all parts of the country. In Samaria they had considerable success, and Philip was sent to confirm them by the gift of the Holy Ghost. The same success attended the word in Damascus, and in all the Jewish cities; for we are informed, after the extraordinary conversion of Paul, which seems to have terrified his associate persecutors, that "the churches had rest throughout all Judea, and Samaria, and Galilee, and were edified, and, walking in the comfort of the Holy Ghost, were multiplied," Acts ix. 30.

The short but severe persecution with which the Jewish council assailed the church, obliged the brethren to fly into distant provinces. They travelled every where, preaching the Lord Jesus to the Jews and proselytes only. And the proselytes of that age, for whose sakes the gift of tongues seems to have been given, are estimated at one-fifth of the Jewish nation. What a gracious providence superintended the infant church! This persecution which was intended to exterminate Christianity, occasioned it to be disseminated more and more.

III. After the course of five years, in which the converted Jews and proselytes were considerably established, it pleased God, according to the ancient prophecies, to open to his servants an abundant harvest in the Gentile world. This required an

extraordinary revelation; for the ceremonial law was a partition-wall between the Hebrew and the heathen. Peter, one day while hungry, saw in a vision a great sheet let down from heaven, containing a number of animals ceremonially unclean; and a voice said, "rise, Peter, slay and eat." But he answered, not so, Lord, for that which is common among the Gentiles, or unclean in its kind, hath not at any time entered my mouth. The voice replied, "what God hath cleansed, that call not thou common." This was repeated the second time, and then the whole was taken up into heaven. Cornelius, a devout and benevolent man, and centurion of the Italian band in Cæsarea, had a correspondent vision. He saw an angel of God enter his closet, who assured him that his prayers and alms were come up for a memorial before God, and enjoined him to send for Peter, who would instruct him in the Christian doctrine. On the arrival of Cornelius's servants, Peter instantly understood the import of his vision, that he should associate with the heathen and instruct them. And while he preached, the Holy Ghost fell upon Cornelius and all his friends, consecrating them the first-fruits of the Gentiles to God. What a striking interposition of heaven for the salvation of the Gentiles.

When returned to Jerusalem, Peter vindicated this devotion of conduct by appealing to the divine power. "What was I," said he, "that I could withstand God, seeing he gave the Holy Ghost to them, as well as to us?" Acts x.

About the same time, Paul also went to the Gentiles to turn them from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan to God, that their hearts might be purified by faith. And when the apostles and elders at Jerusalem, had heard him relate his success, they glorified God, and gave both him and Barnabas the right hand of fellowship, that they

should preach to the heathen. And being wishful to aid whatever God might do, they wrote circular letters, concerning the ceremonial liberty of the Gentiles ; but cautioned them to abstain from fornication, from meats offered to idols, and from blood. Hence, in a short time, all who dwelt in Asia minor heard the gospel.

The apostles and brethren now distributed themselves throughout all the provinces and kingdoms of the empire, which, on account of its extent, was then called the *world*, both by sacred and profane writers. Some travelled to Rome, to Gaul, to Spain, and to the isles of Britain. Others pursued their route to Egypt, and preached in all the cities on the north of Africa as far as Carthage. Paul and Barnabas, with their colleagues, extended their labors to all the cities and islands of Greece, and to the Grecian colonies in Asia. Some penetrated among the Scythians and other barbarians in the north. Almost in every city these preachers had some fruit, and evangelical men were raised up in all the churches, who imitated the apostles in their life and ministry.

IV. Of this first and general spread of the gospel, the primitive fathers have written considerably, and their testimonies are worthy of our regard. We shall select a few passages illustrative of the subject.

“The gospel,”* says Eusebius, “like the sun, enlightened the world at once. Great multitudes of people, both in cities and villages, were brought into the church, by the ministry of the apostles, like corn stored up in a granary.

When the malicious Celsus objected to the novelty of Christianity, Origen replied, “here is the mystery, that a new doctrine, in so short a time, should

* Eccl. Hist. lib. ii. c. 3.

so surprisingly prevail over all the world ; over the Greeks and barbarians, over the learned and illiterate, over every order and profession, and persuade them with so firm a belief of its divine authority that they are ready to seal their faith with their blood.”*

“The philosophers,”† says Clemens Alexandrinus, “pleased the Greeks only, nor did every one please all. Plato followed Socrates ; Theophrastus, Aristotle ; Cleanthus, Zeno ; every master had his own school and his own scholars. But our great Masters’ philosophy was not confined to Judea, as theirs to Greece ; it diffused its lustre over the world at large : it was embraced by whole cities and nations, and no man can resist its force, who will leisurely contemplate its wisdom : the philosophers themselves have been captivated by its charms.—If the Grecian philosophy were suppressed in any place by the magistrates, it presently disappeared. On the contrary, our religion has been persecuted by kings—by emperors—by governors—by generals—and by the populace, who were more ferocious than all the others. They have combined the whole of their power and ingenious malice to exterminate Christianity : and yet it flourishes the more, and does not droop and die, as it certainly must have done had it been of mere human invention.”

Arnobius, in his second book, defends Christianity against the degrading assertions of the heathens in a similar manner. “You should not, I think, be a little surprised to see this despised name every where prevail, and in so short a time. There is no nation (in the empire) however barbarous and uncivilized, whose manners have not been softened and improved by this philanthropic institution. And what is yet more surprising, it has subdued the

* Contra Celsum, fol. 21.

† Coll. lib. vi. fol. 502.

brightest geniuses. Orators, critics, lawyers, physicians, and philosophers, have yielded to its force. Its disciples are so sincere and pious in their profession, as to forego the enjoyments of life, and life itself, rather than renounce the cross. Hence, notwithstanding all your edicts and prosecutions—all your menaces and massacres—all your hangmen and ingenious tortures, they not only become more numerous, but more vigorous in their resolution. Can you suppose all this is brought about by chance; that men will die for a religion, of whose divine authority they are not assured; or, that there is a general conspiracy of fools and madmen to throw away their lives for a phantom?"

V. The first planting of Christianity affords such evidences of its divine original, such abundant support to believers, and such animating hopes with regard to its second and universal spread, as entitle it to the fullest consideration. But our limits require very great brevity.

We are here presented with a small company of plain and pious men, leaving Judea, and travelling over the empire, to exalt their crucified master, as the Lord and Saviour of the world. They had little subsistence from the churches in their own country; but when exigency required, they did not disdain to labour with their hands. We see them enduring pain and hunger, hatred and reproach, imprisonment and stripes; and, most of them, laying down their lives for the testimony of Jesus. With irreligion and vice they made no compound, but established the throne, and founded the church of Christ on the ruin of idols. Their zeal resulted from knowledge; their high commission made them debtors to all men; and the love of Christ in their hearts could not be quenched by adversity. They had seen their most gracious Lord face to face, heard him preach, and beheld the powerful effects

of his ministry and miracles. They had received the most indubitable proofs of his resurrection, in sacred and social offices ; and they beheld when he ascended to heaven. The mystery hid in ages past had just been unveiled to their view ; they felt in their hearts the power and love of Christ ; and the energy with which they preached pierced their auditors. and sometimes caused them to fall down on their faces and give glory to God, Acts ii. 37. 1 Cor. xiv. 24, 25.

VI. Every thing, however, was not against the first teachers of Christianity. The incredible excess to which superstition and vice had attained, induced many of the more sober heathens to give a cordial reception to a religion which promised them a full emancipation from the yoke of demons. Some of their goddesses were *naked*, or nearly so. Vulcan walked limping ; Apollo was formed with a smooth chin ; Æsculapius all beard ; Neptune with blue eyes ; Mercury with wings at his feet, and Saturn with fetters. Erigene hung herself, that she might become a goddess ; Castor and Pollux died by turns that they might become immortal, and Hercules was burnt in Mount Ætna, that he might be elevated to heaven. The theatres, games, and feasts of the Romans, were insupportably lewd and licentious. Women of fashion were weighed down with gold and jewels, and they could scarcely be saluted without the offensive smell of brandy.—Rapes and adulteries were authorized. Divorce was the natural consequence of marriage : they married to divorce, and divorced to marry again.* No sooner, therefore, was the Christian religion properly understood by the better sort of the heathen, than they turned from dumb idols to serve the living and true God. They justly concluded those

*Tertullian's Apology.

doctrines to be from heaven, which brought men into so near a resemblance of the divine original. If Christianity obtained in any city among a few faithful families, it was sure to prevail; and frequently in a short time. In the commencement of the third century, Gregory Thaumaturgus came to Neo-Cæsaria, and found but seventeen Christians; but after labouring twenty-six years in that city, there remained no more than seventeen persons attached to the ancient idolatries.

Christianity must have derived considerable assistance also from the many venerable and learned authors, who wrote in its defence, and attacked the superstition of the Gentiles. Their arguments could not fail to produce a luminous effect on the heathen reader. The victories they obtained when attacking idolatry, or refuting a pagan opponent, were decisive above all that fame can recount. It was common for the heathen to reproach the Christians with the *Galilean*, and with his crucifixion. Here Tertullian retorts, and in their own humour: "Your gods," says he,* "are made out of old pots and kettles, and the only difference is the workmanship and consecration. If you expose us to tortures, your gods endure far greater. The carpenter must be guilty of profaneness and sacrilege before he can make a god. You fix us to crosses and gibbets, and which of your divinities does not endure similar severities? You murder us with swords and spears, but your own gods are treated far worse; the axe, the saw, and the chisel are only some of the instruments of cruelty with which you torment them.—Our heads are severed from our bodies, but your gods have no heads till they are fastened on with solder or glue. You expose us to the flames, and there your idols are melted before they can assume

*Apol. cap. xx.

the dignity of divinities. You condemn us to the mines, and from thence is dug the substance of your gods. You also banish us to some of those islands where some of your gods were born, and some were buried.”

VII. Persecution, contrary to all human estimation, contributed very much towards the general spread of the gospel. Christianity, unarmed and unprotected, for the space of two hundred and ninety years, combating the unabating malice of the Jews, the pride and scorn of the philosophers, sustained in some provinces eight, and in some eleven storms of imperial persecution. The pagan priests, actuated by jealousy and hatred, never ceased to solicit these persecutions; and when earthquakes, plagues, or military disasters occurred, instead of bearing them as the visitations of providence on a guilty people, they never failed to enrage the populace, by insinuating that the gods were angry because the temples were deserted, and the Christians, instead of being thrown to the lions, received protection. These were dreadful words in the ears of an enraged populace, and they often caused them to pour their utmost fury on the unoffending church.

At this period, attachment to the temples, and prejudices in favour of ancient superstition, were strong, and retarded many from hearing the gospel. Hence it pleased the wise and gracious God to permit the power and excellency of Christianity to be displayed in the sufferings and martyrdom of the saints, that the heathens might believe.

In the commencement of the later persecutions, many of the rich and weak professors of Christianity, fell from the faith, and offered incense to idols to save themselves and their property. This emboldened the heathen, and grieved the faithful, but it did not intimidate them. The amphitheatre, the forum, or place where the Christians avowed their

religion, was crowded with pagan spectators. Here they saw ecclesiastics, laymen, and frequently delicate women, brought before the magistrates, and every effort tried to induce them to renounce the Lord Jesus, and to offer incense to the emperor's statue, or to other idols. They saw them endure a series of tortures, the most ingenious that rage and cruelty could devise: tortures of burning, scourging, or fractures, which were often protracted for several days. They saw the fortitude, meekness and patience with which the saints supported their sufferings, and heard the prayers they offered to God for their misguided persecutors, and for all the world. They saw the full triumph of the faith, which transported the sufferers to a contempt of death, and almost to an insensibility of bodily pain. They saw the utmost powers of earth and hell despised; and a sight so divine could not be unproductive of very extraordinary effects. One part of the multitude was mad with rage, and ascribed the fortitude of the martyrs to an unaccountable obstinacy. But those who were more judicious, and better disposed, regarded the martyrs in a different view. Seeing them renounce riches, liberty and life, sooner than their religion, by the worship of idols, commanded their admiration, and subdued their prejudices.

They would no longer remain unacquainted with those divine doctrines which communicated to the sufferers a support more than human. The amiable, quiet, and industrious lives of the Christians, were contrasted with the ferocious dispositions of their persecutors; and the happy death of the former, with the miserable exit of the latter. The full and perfect light of revelation was opposed to the feeble glimmerings of pagan philosophy; the purity and simplicity of the Christian worship were compared with the profane and superstitious rituals of

the temples; the reasonableness of approaching God by *one* Mediator, who associated in his adorable person the divine and human nature, was contrasted with the multitude of gods who were once artists or princes. They unveiled the real face of Christianity, and acknowledged her original to be from heaven.

It was, therefore, to promote the conversion of the heathen, that the Lord Jesus exposed his precious members; yea, the choice rams of his flock in sacrifice. The conversions made by the martyrdom of a few faithful Christians were more than could have been made by a thousand homilies.

It is worthy here to add, that in some cases of general carnage, in which the saints could not have glorified God in this manner by their death, he preserved them by a particular providence. Previously to the taking of Jerusalem by Titus, the Christians were warned of God, with Simeon their bishop, to flee to Pella beyond the Jordan. Also, when the Vandals under Alaric stormed the city of Rome, the Christians fled to their church, and the pagans to their temples. The barbarians pursued them, and spared neither age nor sex: but when they came to the church in which the Christians were assembled, they had not the power to hurt an individual. These are encouraging instances of God having scaled his servants, and vouchsafed to protect his church. The latter instance is successfully urged by Augustine, in his city of God, against paganism, as a special interposition of providence in favour of Christianity.

VIII. Having spoken concerning the sufferings of the saints, it is proper to add a few observations concerning the awful vengeance of God on their hardened persecutors. With regard to the Jews, the crucifixion of Jesus, and the obstinate rejection of his gospel, when confirmed by a series of miracles,

were crimes which merited the most signal vengeance of heaven. But that long suffering of God, which had borne with their fathers forty years in the wilderness, exercised its clemency towards them for the same number of years under the gospel economy. But the punishment of the guilty seems the heavier for being delayed. Having in the seventieth year of Christ, revolted against the Romans, they were shut up in Jerusalem, and sustained a most calamitous siege, in which eleven hundred thousand of them perished by the sword, the pestilence, and famine. Those who survived, according to the words of Christ, were led away captive to all nations. Also, in the reign of Trajan, and of Adrian, his successor, they revolted again, under Barchocheva, a false Messiah, and massacred the Romans wherever their interest prevailed. They were infatuated to destruction. Adrian slew five hundred and eighty thousand of them in Judea, and seven hundred and twenty thousand more in the different provinces. He razed also the foundation of the temple, and caused a ploughshare to pass over it, Luke xxi. This was a striking accomplishment of our Saviour's prediction, and a luminous evidence of the truth of Christianity. Nor would the Christians be wanting to notice it, and to draw a just and striking parallel between the sins and punishments of this hardened people. To these may be added, the diseases and calamities which God inflicted on Herod, on Maximian, on Valerian, and others, who had persecuted the church. He who toucheth Zion toucheth the apple of God's eye.

IX. From these deplorable scenes of Pagan fury, which threatened to exterminate the church, we are unexpectedly called to contemplate her sudden elevation to honour and influence, and to see her caressed, more than ever she had been despised.

While the imperial sceptre was in the hands of

heathen princes, Christianity had but a small proportion of the great and learned among its converts. Frequently exposed to provincial or general persecutions, or in constant apprehension from edicts unrepealed, its professors exceeded our conception in faith, purity, and love. The converts from paganism embraced it from a conviction of its excellence, and at the risk of every worldly comfort.—They made the Lord their only hope, and gloried in suffering for his name. But the wise and righteous God, who has invariably placed mankind in a state of probation, saw it meet at this period to reverse the adversity of the saints, and give them the highest prosperity that the imperial authority and munificence could confer.

Constantine, on his investment with the imperial diadem, had to contend with Maxentius, who had become a tyrant at Rome. When entering on the expedition, he was dubious from whom of the gods he should solicit assistance. He recollected that the pagan divinities had afforded no aid to the superstitious Dioclesian, while his father Constantius, who had renounced the mythology of the Greeks, prospered in all he did. Such was his state of mind when Providence confirmed to him this promise of Christ,—“If any man will do the will of my Father, he shall know of my doctrine, whether it be of God.”

One day in the afternoon, while marching with his army, there appeared a cross of light above the sun, with a pendant inscription, “conquer by this,” which was distinctly seen by him and his soldiers. At night the Saviour appeared to him in a dream, and repeated the vision, and enjoined him to make a standard like the cross he had seen, which should be a pledge of victory to him in all his wars.*

* Life of Constan. by Euseb. book i. chap. xxviii. to xxxi.

Constantine having succeeded in destroying the tyrant, was the more confirmed in the faith of Christ, and instantly turned his whole attention towards the prosperity of the *church* and *empire*. He succeeded, also, in various expeditions against the barbarians in the north, who had committed depredations on the Roman territory. Licinius, who revolted against him in Asia, was vanquished and slain. By this last victory, the immense empire, extending from Britain and Spain to Egypt and Persia, fell under the auspices of his imperial sceptre.

X. In ecclesiastic affairs he followed the advice of the clergy, and the clergy of that age were worthy of his confidence. All former edicts against the Christians were instantly repealed, and new ones issued in their favour as often as occasion required. Edicts were issued soon after, prohibiting paganism, and commanding the demolition of the temples; and in remote places, in which compliance was neglected, the soldiers marched and threw the edifice into a heap of ruins. If the antiquarian grieve at this, he should recollect that the Christians had in view God's repeated injunctions to the Jews to destroy every vestage of idolatry. And having recently suffered so much from the heathens, it could scarcely be expected they would do otherwise. He erected churches in Constantinople and Jerusalem, which, if possible, exceed the temples in architectural magnificence.

His liberality to the clergy corresponded with their indigence. Some of them he promoted to considerable offices of trust and dignity: and on their return from the council of Nice, every man had liberty to say what his wants were, and the sum was paid out of the imperial coffer.

Socra. Eccles. Hist. book i. chap. ii. Eusebius positively affirms. that he had this account from the emperor himself.

With regard to conversions, they were rapid and superficial; but force was never applied. The church threw open her arms, and embraced the heathen on a mere change of opinions. The nobility, of course, readily conformed to the religion of the court; and last of all, the learned began to extol Christianity as the best and most sublime philosophy.

Hymns and eulogies were immediately composed in honour of God, who had enabled his faithful church to war a victorious warfare against idolatry and vice. His awful justice was celebrated, which had excinded those emperors and their families who had persecuted and wasted the flock. Those denunciations of God in the psalms and the prophets, were not unaptly applied to this destruction; and those promises which belong exclusively to the latter day's glory, were applied at least in an encouraging sense to this prosperous age. "Kings shall become thy nursing fathers, and queens thy nursing mothers. A little one shall become a thousand, and a strong one a great nation. He shall make thine enemies to be at peace with thee, and the sons of strangers shall build thy walls." Gratitude and duty induced them to celebrate the virtues of Constantine. He was applauded in their sermons as the Christian Zorobabel, who had re-edified and protected the church and city of the living God.

SECTION VI.

OF THE APOSTACY OF THE CHURCH—THE ORIGIN AND PROGRESS OF THE ANTICHRISTIAN EMPIRE.

FROM the general influx of the superstitious heathen into the church, while under the patronage of Constantine, the worst of consequences might have

been augued to the religion of Jesus Christ. The loss of discipline was attended with the loss of piety; and Zion, instead of continuing the beautiful garden of the Lord, became a deplorable waste. The full tide of imperial prosperity dazzled the Christian teachers, when they should have rejoiced with trembling, and remembered that their master's kingdom, not being of this world, his church should have been augmented with real converts, not with pagan proselytes. We shall here trace the several steps of this apostacy, with a view to caution ourselves by the fall of others.

I. The holy martyrs had always been revered; the cemeteries which contained their tombs had been frequented for devotion; but the happiest way of honouring them, was to have imitated their piety. About the year 355, this honour was, in some places, extended to adoration. Churches were erected to their memory, and placed under their immediate protection. The walls were ornamented with, scripture pieces, for the instruction of those who could not read, and the statue of the martyr was placed in a conspicuous situation. These objects were instantly regarded with more than human reverence; the people so recently accustomed to worship idols in the temples, were hereby seduced to transfer their superstition to the churches, and to bow before wood and stone, which could neither hear nor speak. This homage gave the glory of the infinite God to a finite creature, because it supposed the martyrs like the Deity, to fill both heaven and earth. The clergy instead of rending their garments, as Paul and Silas at Lystra, and restraining the first appearance of this superstition, seem to have contemplated it with approbation. Relics, real or pretended, were collected with great avidity, and multitudes of miracles were feigned to be wrought at the tombs of the martyrs. In the schools,

the lives of these venerable characters were given to the students for themes, with permission to add fable to truth; and in a course of years, these legends were collected and palmed on the world as genuine histories.

II. About the same time, considerable numbers of Christians adopted a monastic life: and piety, preferring the solitude of the deserts to the endearments of society, strongly marks the superstition and degeneracy of the age. Ammon was the founder and father of the Egyptian monks.* This man having married a wife through the solicitation of his relatives, persuaded her on the evening after their marriage to adopt his mode of living. His modesty is said to have been so great, that he would not take off his clothes to pass a river. Another of these fathers usually took his food in his hand, and ate it walking: he thought that sitting down to dinner, looked as though he made eating and drinking a serious part of his employment. By habits of abstinence and fasting, the quantity of bread and herbs on which they chiefly subsisted became incredibly small. Their hours of sleep were also restricted, and many of them observed the midnight hour of devotion.

Companies of men, drying up their bodies by abstinence, and secluding themselves from riches and pleasures, could not fail to attract the veneration of a superstitious age. Monasteries and abbies were erected in every part of the Christian world, and by successive grants and legacies of lands, many of them become exceedingly enriched. The founders of these religious institutions generally made choice of a situation capable of a high state of cultivation, and by their own industry turned the wild wastes into agreeable pleasure grounds, and fertile pastures. The nations, having at that time but little

* Evagri. Eccl. Hist. Lib. i. cap. xxxi.

foreign trade, it was deemed highly meritorious to employ the poor, by raising in convenient places a temple to the living God, and a residence for his servants. Piety was undoubtedly their original motive, but it was singularly misapplied, and consequently failed in its effect. While the turbulent Cyril was bishop of Alexandria, we find these peaceful monks easily seduced to leave their cells, and shed blood in the factions of that city. A life of holiness must associate with a life of usefulness.—Hence it would have been far better for them to have lived in the equitable discharge of relative duties, and, like the holy prophets, to have struggled with the vices of their age.

III. The large and frequent schisms, which happened in the third and fourth centuries, and the crimes with which they charged one another, are a further proof of the degeneracy of the Christian church. Cyprian has written a beautiful treatise on the unity of the church throughout the world, and it were to have been wished, that his own age, and the ages which followed, had realized his doctrine as much as those which preceded. But while one man is pious, and another wicked, sacred union cannot subsist; while one Christian conscientiously adheres to the laws of faith, and another openly violates them, the peace of the church is destroyed. The Roman Catholics have indeed boasted of their unity, and of the succession of their bishops, not only from Peter, but from Adam. And what church was ever more divided in opinions, or what sectarians were ever so intolerant to one another, as the fraternities which composed that church? It is the corruption and tyranny which have occasioned schisms, and made them become a necessary evil. So early as the year 200, Victor, bishop of Rome, excommunicated the eastern world of Christians, because they did not keep the festival of Easter on

the same day as the western churches ; and if a circumstance so inconsiderable occasioned so great a rent, we should not be surprised at the schisms which followed.

With regard to those sects or heresies of the purer ages, we should be aware, that our information concerning their lives and opinions is derived from those who wrote against them ; and writers in that situation are not entitled to implicit confidence. The Ebionites, Gnostics, and others, who induced many weak Christians to apostatize in the first and second centuries, seem to have been philosophical societies, who paid some kind of worship to the Deity, and received such parts of the sacred scriptures as coincided with their favorite opinions.— But having no proper code of discipline, we may reasonably believe their morals were very much depraved.

IV. Previous to the Dioclesian persecution, the churches had enjoyed repose for forty years, and had been increased by a new generation, not inured, like their fathers, to suffer for righteousness' sake. No sooner were the edicts published for every person to sacrifice to the gods, and to honour, that is, worship the emperor's statue, than crowds of Christians in every city apostatized to save their lives and property. The lapsed, on the return of peace, emboldened by their numbers, became clamorous with the bishops and confessors to be restored to the peace of the church. When the lapsed of Carthage addressed Cyprian on this subject, he replied in a very paternal manner, and agreeably to the usage of the church. He acquainted them with his grief, on hearing that the high road to Carthage was thronged with Christians to offer incense ; but, that he was willing to admit them as soon as their course of penance was performed, and to admit them before would do them no good : and he blamed the

confessors who had been induced to grant the peace of the church prematurely to some, as more compassionate than wise.

Cornelius, bishop of Rome, took a quite different course ; setting aside the ancient discipline of penance, he admitted the lapsed at once ; and wrote letters to Gaul, to Asia, and Egypt, to do the same. This occasioned a schism at Rome. The poor who had saved their souls by fidelity, separated from the rich, who had saved their estates by apostacy.—Novatus, and five more presbyters of Rome, espoused their cause, and wrote letters to all the churches concerning the steps they had taken.—Schisms were consequently occasioned in Byzantium, now Constantinople, in Alexandria, and in all those churches in which the apostolic discipline was superseded. The Catharians, or ancient Puritans, every where united with the Novatians, and that sect became great and flourishing for several ages. Theodosius, the pious emperor, seems to have entertained a high regard for them and to have conferred many favours on their bishops, because they were peaceful subjects, and adhered to the true faith, that Christ is one substance with the Father.

Schism, it must be acknowledged, is a deplorable evil, to which recourse should never be had, but in the foulest cases, where conscience is deeply concerned, and where redress cannot be obtained.—And even in those sad cases, men should be cautious how they proceed : it is often better to bear one evil than occasion many. We cannot view this great sect without emotions of anxiety. They were exposed to the fury of the heathen, on the one hand, which sometimes extended to martyrdom, and to unkind offices of those Christians from whom they had separated. Surely nothing could have induced them to do this, but a tender conscience. Indeed,

it does not appear that the Novatians had any alternative, but either to separate or be corrupted, and no consideration can compensate for the loss of purity.

Much as the circumstances which led to the Novatian schism are to be deplored, in the next age a rent of a far more awful nature divided the church at large. The influx of the heathen into the church, during the reign of Constantine, has been already noticed; and it was not long before she had severely to repent of her incaution in having opened her bosom to a multitude of unregenerate children.—Arius, a presbyter of Alexandria, published to the world, that Jesus Christ was but a creature, though the first and highest of all created spirits. He seems to have been led into this error by some unguarded discourse of his bishop, and following the Septuagint's corrupt translation of Proverbs viii. 22. "the Lord possessed me," which the seventy read, "ἐκτισέμε. The Lord created me in the beginning of his ways." And admitting the Septuagint were a true reading, it was very preposterous to rest so weighty a doctrine on a single text. When seeking the truth, we should humbly follow the general scope of revelation. Some of the ancient Christians really understood this passage to speak of the Logos, or word, which was made flesh; but others regarded it only as a grand personification of the divine wisdom, which could no more be created than the only begotten of the Father.

This controversy was as delicate as interesting; for the incomprehensible nature of God cannot be defined. "Now we see through a glass *darkly*;" that is, by analogy—by the reverence we owe to an earthly father, we are taught to reverence our Father who is in heaven; and by the idea of an

earthly sovereign, we contemplate and worship the Sovereign Majesty of the universe.

“What can we reason but from what we know.”

The Logos, therefore, is not understood to be begotten of the Father, as in human procreation; he is the brightness, or beaming forth of his glory, and the express image of his person.

On this subject, the Arians displayed a wanton wit. They appealed to reason, as though reason had been competent to decide, that a father must be older than his son, that three persons could not be one person. But the Catholics appealed to the divine scriptures, that the doctrine of the one true and eternal God, was there copiously revealed under the persons and names of Father, Son, and Spirit. The doctrine implied no absurdity by being incapable of definition; and it was as impossible for the Arian, and Socinian, to define the nature of God, as the Christian to define the existence of the godhead. It discovers a most delightful sociality in the Deity, and shines forth with peculiar glory in the human redemption. “God was in Christ reconciling the world unto himself; by whom we have access to the Father, through the Spirit. If any man keep my word, the Father and I will love him, and we will come unto him, and make our abode with him, I will pray the Father, and he shall give you another Comforter that he may abide with you for ever. Know ye not, that your bodies are the temples of the Holy Ghost? And if any man defile the temple of God, him shall God destroy. Eye hath not seen, ear hath not heard, neither have entered the heart of man, the things that God hath prepared for them that love him. But God hath revealed them to us by his Spirit; for the Spirit revealeth all things; yea, the deep things of God.”

The doctrine of the Trinity, or godhead, supersedes all imaginary demonstrations of its absurdity, by its perfect unity. This renders our addresses to each of the triune God, proper and perfectly safe. When we address the Father, we worship the God who made the world; when we address the Son, we worship the same Creator and Lord, John i. 3. And when we address the Holy Spirit, we worship him who moved on the face of the great deep, who regenerates our nature, and who shall quicken our mortal bodies. Hence the doctrine is scriptural, and free from all absurdity. But Arianism implies absurdities both real and blasphemous: that the Logos, a creature, is the express image of God; that a creature created all creatures; that he receives the incommunicable names of God without horror; that he upholdeth all things by the word of his power; and that he thought it no robbery to be equal with God!!!

But the disputes were not confined to the clergy; the laboring people were seen disputing in the streets and markets on these sublime topics, and sometimes ready to fight. Sad signs that piety had lost her influence in the church.

To compose these troubles, Constantine convened the celebrated council of Nice, which consisted of three hundred and eighteen bishops, and more than that number of priests and deacons. Here they established the Homoöusian faith, that the Son is one substance with the Father; which term became for the future, a *test-word*, and formed an insuperable barrier against the inundation of error.

After the death of Constantine, the succeeding emperor was persuaded by a priest to embrace the errors of Arius, and to give his followers possession of most of the churches in Asia and Egypt. The Arians possessed the churches in Constantinople also for the space of forty years. But the Homo-

ousian faith finally prevailed, and it will ever prevail while the scriptures are considered as the word of God. In Alexandria, Athanasius stood like a rock; and though he was banished three times, and loaded with calumnies without number, nothing could move him from the truth. In Gaul and the west, the Arians could do nothing; the churches being warned on the commencement of the controversy, to hold fast the pure apostolic faith, as once delivered to the saints.

In the issue, the Arians quarrelled and divided among themselves on this curious question, whether the Father could be called Father before the creation of the Son? And after troubling the church three hundred years, these sects were totally suppressed.

O blessed and adorable Lord Jesus! hast thou condescended to assume our frail humanity, and to officiate as our prophet, priest, and king; and have men, seeing thee in the form of a servant, and in these subordinate offices, overlooked thy divine character, and withheld the homage due to thy eternal majesty? Pity their weakness, enlighten their minds, and pardon their sin, for they know not what they do. Let the illumination of thy Holy Spirit so irradiate our minds, that in seeing thee we may see the Father also. "O holy, blessed, and glorious Trinity, three persons and one God, have mercy upon us, miserable sinners. Let it please thee to bring into the way of truth all such as have erred and are deceived; that we may worship thy name ever one God, world without end!" Amen.

Before the propagation of the gospel, the world abounded, even as now, with religious opinions.—The Jews, philosophers, and pagans were divided into sects which combated one another's opinions. Our knowledge is so circumscribed, and our researches after truth so slow and imperfect, that we

cannot help variety of opinion with regard both to the study of nature and of revelation. In this view mental errors are entitled to the same compassion as blindness and lameness in the body.

In the first three centuries, ecclesiastic history has enumerated eighty sects that troubled the church; and in the fourth and fifth centuries near fifty more. But some of these had but a short existence, and scarcely extended themselves beyond the limits of a city. The Novatians and Arians were probably five times more numerous than all the others. The pious Montanists, Cataphrygians, as well as the Catharians, seem to have united with the Novatians, which was one cause why that sect became so great. Many of the sectarians united also with the Arians.

V. We shall next consider the general apostacy and corruption of the clergy; and true piety would wish to draw the veil of oblivion over so painful a subject. This being impossible, it becomes our duty to derive the best instruction we can from the desolation which sin hath made in the sanctuary of God.

The disciples, unacquainted with the nature of their master's kingdom, contended who should be greatest. Jesus, knowing the consequences of this evil, destroyed it by the root. He took "a little child, and set him in the midst of them, and said, verily I say unto you, except ye be converted, and become as little children, ye shall not enter into the kingdom of heaven. The kings of the Gentiles exercise lordship, and are called benefactors. It shall not be so with you; but he that is greatest among you, let him be as the younger, and he that is chief, as he that doth serve," Luke xxii. 24, 25, 26.

These solemn instructions the apostles never forgot: the unity and comfort of Christian society

were involved in keeping them. The church at Jerusalem they govern as a council of brethren, and with the advice of the people, Acts xv. 22. St. Paul having succeeded in planting churches in most of the great cities of Asia and Greece, ordained a proper number of pastors in each church, whom he sometimes calls bishops, and sometimes presbyters. That the office of bishop and presbyter differed but in age and honor, fully appears from the following scriptures.

Paul and Barnabas "return again to Lystra, and Iconium, and Antioch, confirming the souls of the disciples, exhorting them to continue in the faith. And when they had ordained them presbyters in every church, they prayed with fasting, and commended them to the Lord, on whom they believed," Acts xiv. 21, 23.

From Miletus, Paul sent for the presbyters of Ephesus, and in giving them a solemn charge he said, "take heed therefore unto yourselves, and to all the flock over which the Holy Ghost hath made you bishops," Acts xx. 28.

"Paul and Timotheus, the servants of Jesus Christ, to all the saints in Christ Jesus which are at Philippi, with the bishops and deacons," Phil. i. 1.

Hence we may fairly conclude, that the office of a bishop was but another name for the office of a presbyter; otherwise they had many bishops in this church, but no presbyters.

"For this cause left I thee in Crete, that thou shouldst set in order the things that are wanting, and ordain presbyters in every city, as I appointed thee. If any man be blameless, the husband of one wife, having faithful children, not accused of riot, or unruly: for a bishop must be blameless, as the steward of God," Titus i. 5, 6, 7.

"The presbyters which are among you I exhort, who am also a presbyter, and a witness of the suf-

ferings of Christ, and also a partaker of the glory that shall be revealed : feed the flock of God which is among you, performing the office of bishops," 1 Peter v. 1, 2. The evasive manner in which these texts have been translated, shows how much the lovers of episcopacy are terrified at the idea of having many bishops in one city ; of St. Peter calling himself a presbyter ; and bidding presbyters perform the office of bishops.

This was ecclesiastical polity in the age of uncorrupted simplicity. The presbyters, qualified by the Holy Ghost, instructed the church, and laboured at their trades to support their families ; for the church, in many places, was so small and poor, that it could not support its itinerant ministers. "Among the ancients," says Jerome, "bishops and presbyters were the same, the one being a name of dignity, the other of age."*

In a course of years, and even before the death of St. John, talents, experience, and age, had made considerable distinction among the presbyters ; and he, who was best qualified, had gradually been called to a principal share in managing the church in every city. After this distinction, the appellations of bishop and presbyter, which had been promiscuously given to all the ministers, became appropriate. The senior or presiding was called bishop, and those ministers who assisted him, if he had any assistants, were called presbyters. These distinctions having obtained in the great churches first, spread throughout the Christian world.

These remarks are not intended to depreciate primitive episcopacy, or to serve a party interest ; they intend no more than the investigation of truth on a controverted subject. Nothing could be more ami-

* *Quonquam apud veteres iidem episcopi et presbyteri fuerint ; quia illud nomen dignitas est, hoc ætatis. Hieron. ep. 83. ad Ocean. Tom. 2.*

able than to see a venerable pastor at the head of the church in every large town, and governing it with the advice of his brethren and the people : so Cyprian and the other good bishops governed their churches. Their age and office, combined with a life of usefulness, conferred on them a salutary influence in composing the differences and rectifying the faults of their flock.

Some great evils, however undersigned, were the consequence of this innovation. Those good men who had imitated the apostles in their itinerancy, and successfully planted and nourished the churches, soon desisted from their extensive labors ; and the edification of the churches was as much an object of St. Paul's travels as the planting them, Rom. i. 7—15.

Experience soon discovered another evil, too difficult to be removed. Whenever a bishop became imperious or corrupt, he could seldom be deposed without a schism. Besides, the council of bishops, usually convened on such occasions, was ever solicitous to enlarge rather than to curtail the rights of episcopacy. Corruption having once obtained, soon secured itself a prevailing interest.

But the clergy were not long content with the simple distinction of bishop, presbyter and deacon. When disputes arose, it was usual for the bishop of a small town to ask advice of the bishop of the metropolis, who had many clergymen, and whose advice would be regarded as wise and weighty. This was highly proper, and often productive of happy effects. However, after the bishops of great cities were invested with civil authority, they claimed this right of advising and controlling the country bishops, as the prerogative of their sees. Hence originated the order of archbishops, and soon after the order of patriarchs. From this pe-

riod, the church was governed, as the kings of the Gentiles govern their kingdoms.

VI. Having distinguished the clergy from the laity, I feel it a duty to bring forward an observation, that the liberty of the prophesying both in the Jewish and in the Christian church, was never denied to laymen whose piety and abilities were approved. By the gift of the Holy Ghost, all believers were constituted the sons of God, and brethren of Christ. He had washed them from their sins in his own blood, and made them kings and priests to God. They were a chosen generation, and a royal priesthood. But many of the gifted men were so encumbered with families and business, that they could not be wholly devoted to the work, and it would have been wrong to have suppressed their talents, Rom. xii. 3.

In the church of Corinth, and no doubt in all the great churches, they enjoyed the liberty of instructing the people. Saint Paul expresses his approbation of these meetings, by exhorting them to preserve order. "If any man speak in an unknown tongue, let it be by two, or at most by three, and that by course, and let one interpret. For ye may all prophesy one by one, that all may learn, and all be comforted," 1 Cor. xii. 14.

The liberty of what is now termed lay-preaching was not wholly lost in the time of Origen. Evelpis was invited to preach by Neon, bishop of Laranda, Paulinus by Celsus, bishop of Iconium; and Theodorus by Atticus, bishop of Synnada. These instances are urged in defence of the bishops of Syria, who had permitted Origen to preach. He was a deacon and catechist, but the above were only laymen.* Of this expiring liberty we hear no more; it was soon monopolized by the priesthood. But

* Euseb. Hist. Eccles. lib. 6. cap. xix.

the reader will perceive, that if laymen of talents were so useful in the primitive church, it is the duty of such characters to exert themselves now in the same way for the conversion of their neighbours ; especially every man should officiate as a teacher in his own house.

VII. We shall next consider the loss of liberty in the primitive church, with regard to her unlimited power of choosing pastors. By the desire of St. Peter, the church of Jerusalem chose seven men to take care of their widows and the indigent, who could be useful to their souls as well as to their bodies. Fabian, a layman, was elected Bishop of Rome by the whole congregation, a dove having descended on his head at the moment when they were divided in their choice.* Spyridon, a poor shepherd, was exalted at once, on account of his piety, to be bishop of a city.† Frumentius, a layman also, by the advice of Athanasius, was made bishop over some Indians, to whom he had been useful.‡ Ambrose, when only a catechuman and unbaptized, was elected bishop of Milan.§ In general, a church elected a man of its own community, but they were not obliged to do so.—John Chrysostom, presbyter of Antioch, whose eloquence was never exceeded, was elected to the see of Constantinople.

The first Christian emperor who had liberally supplied the wants of the clergy, promoted many of them to considerable offices of trust and dignity, and enriched the churches with the spoils of paganism, had undesignedly caused the episcopal chair to become an object highly flattering to ambition. From this period, the election of a bishop instead of being preceded by fasting and prayer, and every man voting from his heart, often exhibited shame-

* Euseb. Hist. Eccles. lib. 6. cap. xxix. † Socra. Hist. Eccles. lib. 1. cap. xii. ‡ Ibid. cap. xix. § Ibid. lib. 4. cap. xxx.

ful scenes of noise and riot. The people had no longer any occasion to drag the timorous shepherd from his closet to the church; there were generally two or more competitors. In Alexandria, and in Rome, blood has been shed on those occasions.—The contest between Damasus and Ursicinus for the Roman see, was so great, that one hundred and thirty-seven dead bodies were found in the place in which the Christians had assembled.* Julian permitted the prelates to contend in the palace before the populace, well knowing that the beasts were not so fierce against man, as some of these Christians were outrageous against one another.†

These riotous elections, and the consequent appeals to the emperor, soon annihilated the people's liberty. Theodosius, the younger, under a pretence of preventing a riot, interposed the imperial power, and nominated a bishop for Constantinople. So high a precedent could not be unnoticed. In a little time the kings of Europe did the same. And when the Christian world was divided into parishes, the barons exercised the same power over the churches, which sovereigns did over the sees.—The house of God was not more exempt from villanage than the people. Thus the degenerate Christians let their most sacred privileges slip out of their hands, and were compelled to receive a minister nominated by an individual, however contrary to their inclination. We cannot but shed a tear for this total loss of primitive liberty, and of primitive love. But the glory of the Lord having in some sort departed from the sanctuary, ecclesiastic affairs were scarcely an object of the people's regard.

VIII. The Christian priesthood being now established, and protected by princes and nobles, the

* Ammianus, lib. 27.

† Ibid. lib. 26.

clergy no longer sought promotion by cultivating popular talents, but by paying their court to great men! and in fact, forced their way to the sanctuary by simony or secular interests. They thought of little but preferment, and of increasing their revenues, sometimes by pious frauds, and sometimes by open force. The worship of the martyrs was at first connived at, and presently defended, because it brought the clergy abundance of offerings. It is, however, a duty to observe, that the clergy were not agreed on this subject. Image worship was opposed by a council at Constantinople, and at Ephesus, and, so late as the year seven hundred, by a council at Frankfort.

IX. It might have been easily conjectured, that the use of gowns for the clergy would speedily be introduced, because both the pagan and Jewish priests officiated in flowing robes. But this custom, we are told, was first derived from the philosophers, who lectured in a pall. The fathers seem unwilling to have it said, that it was derived from the ancient priests. However, several bishops in the second century peremptorily refused to wear it. Constantine presented a pall to the bishop of Jerusalem, woven with threads of gold, in which he performed the divine service.* About the same time, a great number of bishops attended the dedication of the church of Tyre, in flowing robes. This marks the fondness of the clergy and monks for worldly honours. They now began to introduce many childish imitations of the magnificence of the Jewish worship, and of the pagan superstition; and to enforce the observance of them as essential to salvation.

X. Those who now officiated in the sanctuary, being destitute of extempore gifts, had recourse to liturgies, and many of them to the pitiful method of

* Theod. Hist. Eccles. lib. 2. cap. xxvii.

reading sermons; an indulgence which should be allowed to feeble ministers only. That the church of Carthage used no such liturgy, is plain enough from a passage of Cyprian on the Lord's prayer.

"Et quando in unum cum fratribus convenimus, et sacrificia Divina cum Dei sacerdote celebramus, verecundiæ et disciplinæ memores esse debemus. Non passim ventilare preces nostras inconditis vocibus, nec petitionem commendandam modeste deo, tumultuosa loquacitate jactare, quia Deus non vocis, sed cordis auditor est." This passage relates expressly to the public worship; and if it were conducted according to a prescribed form, what need to caution them against a noisy redundancy of words?

With regard to preaching, we may farther add, that the primitive fathers were not confined to the manuscript, because their homilies and sermons abound with remarks, which could be suggested in the pulpit only. This is illustrated by the case of the mild and learned Atticus, bishop of Constantinople. When he was made a presbyter, he could not preach extempore; but composed his sermons, and committed them to memory; and then repeated them in the church. By this assiduity, he soon acquired the talent of extempore preaching.*

These facts are not adduced to depreciate the real excellence of liturgies, or to recommend the total disuse of prescribed forms, but from an apprehension that they have been productive of fatal effects to vital godliness. The least evil arising from them is, the obligation they impose on able ministers to suppress their talents. No sooner were these indulgences allowed, than the mere reader became qualified to feed the flock; yea, and the dissipated youth could breathe a moment from his

* Socrat. Hist. Eccles. lib. 7. cap. ii.

career of pleasure, and move the machine of public worship with a dexterous hand.

XI. We shall next consider the clerical or anti-christian empire which God permitted to arise and punish the apostacy of the church. It has already been noticed, that Constantine conferred on the bishops many places of trust and dignity. This constituted them rulers of the state, and the pastoral simplicity soon degenerated into political subtlety. We have noticed, also, the manner in which the metropolitans and patriarchs obtained the ascendancy over their brethren in the country. From that period the great bishops seem to have looked wishfully at a power similar to the Jewish high-priest, who sometimes governed the whole nation.

Provincial and general councils were frequently called, for the management of the church and the suppression of heresies. But whatever was the occasion of any council, the rights of the priesthood were always guarded, and new canons made, which were binding to the emperor as well as to his subjects. In a little time the canons became so voluminous and contradictory, that no man could acquire a perfect knowledge of them.

XII. The first object on which the priesthood displayed its secular power, was the pious Novatians, and other religious sects. However, the ancients were not wholly intolerant. When Atticus had ascended the patriarchal chair of Constantinople, he commenced a persecution against the sects; but finding it productive of no good effects, he wisely changed his measures, and treated them with great lenity.

In Egypt the persecution was severe. Theodosius, bishop of Synnada, was furious against heretics; sometimes he prosecuted them in the courts of justice, and sometimes assailed them by an armed force. Cyril, patriarch of Alexandria, did the

same. He took a military force and shut up the Novatian churches, took away the sacred vessels, and deprived Theopemptus, their bishop, of all his property.*

The pontiff of Rome, it could scarcely be expected, would be less active in subjects of this nature, than his cotemporaries. Innocent the first, deprived the Novatians, at a stroke, of all their churches. But his triumph was short; for Alaric, king of the Goths, took the city by storm, and made a terrible carnage among the senators and people. By this calamity the Novatians regained the peaceable possession of their churches. This persecution was as impolitic as unjust, because it disunited the citizens. Had Innocent displayed the mildness of Atticus, it would probably have saved the city. About twenty years after this, Celestine the first, once more totally deprived them of their religious liberties.

The Novatians in Constantinople, after a long repose, were persecuted by the unhappy Nestorius. He was promoted from the see of Antioch, by the command of Theodosius the younger. In his first sermon he discovered the temper of the dignified clergy of that age. "Give me, O emperor," said he, "the earth cleared of heretics, and I in return will give you heaven: assist me in destroying the sects, and I will assist you in subduing the Persians." The young emperor complied with the favourite patriarch, and deprived the Novatians of their churches. The bishops of Asia proceeded against them in the same manner. Anthony, bishop of Germa, was exceedingly severe, and wearied out their patience by his cruelty. At length one of the sufferers, forgetting the spirit of the gospel had the temerity to assassinate him. Nestorius also soon received his reward. By following his

* Socrat. Hist. Eccles. lib. 7. cap. vii.

friend Anastasius in separating the divine and human nature of Christ, he filled the church with tumult, and was deposed and banished from the city.*

XIII. Among the patriarchs who claimed ecclesiastic sovereignty, the bishop of Rome was foremost. He was emboldened to this by his situation in the imperial city, which for ages had accounted herself the mistress of the world. He founded his claim on Matthew xvi. 18. He argued, that the Lord here constituted Peter the rock and head of the church; that he invested him with power to forgive sins, and to bind and loose the souls of men in purgatory; (a place which has no existence, for the souls of departed men go immediately either to heaven or hell.) The pontiff further alleged, that he was invested, as St. Peter's successor, with infallible power to judge and determine all causes and controversies which concerned the church.—But the Lord did not say that he would build the church on frail Peter; he alluded to the eternal rock which the name Peter expressed. Upon this *Petram*, as Cyprian quotes it, and only upon this, he has built his church. The power of remitting sins was given to all the apostles as well as Peter: and it signified no more than the power of applying the promises of pardon and comfort to the penitent. Hence Peter referred Simon Magus to his maker: "Pray God if perhaps the thought of thine heart may be forgiven thee," Acts viii. 22. The Roman pontiff was no more the successor of this apostle than the bishop of Jerusalem, or the bishop of any other city in which Peter had preached. Still, in defiance of shame and all refutation, the pontificate has uniformly asserted its sovereignty and infallibility of judgment.

* Socrat. Hist. Eccles. lib. 7. cap. xxvii. to xxxiv.

After the publication of these haughty doctrines, deposed bishops generally appealed to Rome, and provided they acknowledged the supremacy of that see, they were sure to find an asylum, whatever were their crimes or their real opinions. This gave such umbrage, that Rome was frequently called, "the impious refuge of the clergy."

Rome having published the supremacy of her pontificate, supported it with incredible confidence. Every quarrel which happened between princes, was embraced as a happy occasion to extend its sovereignty, by espousing the cause of the strongest prince. But after all, it was not till the commencement of the eleventh century, that she could, in a proper sense, be said to have realized her pretensions over the west. From this period the catalogue of excommunicated emperors and kings became very large. If the decretals of his holiness were not carried into immediate effect, he would lay an interdict on the whole kingdom, which blasphemously interrupted the worship of Almighty God, and enjoined the subjects to rebel against their lawful sovereign. The pontificate made no scruple to deluge whole kingdoms in blood, in support of its supremacy. Boniface VIII. boldly decreed, that no human creature could be saved, unless he became subject to the see of Rome.* After this, the adage was in every one's mouth, "there is no salvation out of the church."

The erroneous doctrines of the pontificate, it may uniformly be observed, tended either to extend its sovereignty, or to augment its revenues. On the supremacy was founded the claim of investiture to all ecclesiastical preferments. This brought the papal see a vast influx of wealth by simony. But

* Porro subesse Romano Pontifici omni humanæ creaturæ declaramus, dicimus, definimus, et pronunciamus omnino esse de necessitate salutis.

the kings could never be prevailed upon to yield more than a partial submission to this enormous claim. The doctrine of the two swords, so warmly debated when first advanced, was founded on a mutilation of our Saviour's words to Peter, "put up thy sword." By this his holiness inferred, the necessity of having both a temporal and a spiritual sword. The former, by regular forces and crusades of pilgrims to fight against heretics; and the latter to denounce anathemas against the incorrigible. But the main part of the text was omitted, "they that take the sword shall perish by the sword." Hereby the pontiff associated in his own person the high offices of Moses and Aaron, and aided by seventy cardinals, in imitation of the seventy elders, or the seventy disciples, reigned as a god in the universal church. The doctrine of infallibility, brought litigated causes into the papal court, in the form of an appeal; and he whose cause was wanting in equity, would not be defective in bribes. The worship of saints brought crowds of pilgrims annually to particular churches; and in paying their devotion, they did not appear before the Lord empty. The doctrines of penance and absolution, of auricular confession, at least once a year, and the sale of indulgences and dispensations, to live in fornication or adultery, were equally productive to every description of the clergy. Of the same description, are the doctrines of purgatory; masses for the dead; and the keys, or power of binding and loosing in heaven. They produced a terrific effect on the minds of dying people, and often induced them to wrong their children by donations to the church. The doctrine of transubstantiation, or power of changing the bread and wine into the real body and blood of Christ by consecration, operated as the sacramental seal to all the preceding errors. Perhaps the age will come

when it will scarcely be credited that ever a mortal priest presumed to create his immortal Saviour.—Error and interest being here so artfully combined, it will easily be perceived that the pontificate could never be reformed by argument. A good man had no opening but to enter his closet, and weep for the desolations of the sanctuary.

It should, however, be observed, in honour of the ancients, that each of these errors was warmly controverted. The priests, finding their antagonists assail them with arguments from the primitive fathers, were assiduous to interpolate those venerable works with sentiments in favour of these lucrative errors, and to suppress all those passages which militated against them. Daillé, a French protestant minister of incomparable learning, has largely proved, in his treatise on *the right use of the fathers*, that none of their writings have escaped corruption.—The sacred scriptures also did not escape their sacrilegious hands; and in very many passages, though sure of detection, for this book was diffused in languages and nations far beyond the influence of Rome. They particularly suppressed the second commandment, and divided the tenth into two, to keep up the number in the decalogue. But the political state of the world favoured the introduction of the papal errors. The disorganization of the ancient empire permitted the northern nations to pour forth in successive armies over all Europe: they overturned governments, destroyed learning, and gradually changed the language of whole kingdoms. The dark ages ensued, and the people were left entirely in the hands of the clergy. The irruption of these nations must be regarded as the scourge of Almighty God on his apostate and carnal church. The same may be observed with regard to the success of the Saracens in the east. Consequently, in this pontificate, or reigning priesthood, which strug-

gled to take heaven and earth into its own hands, we are presented with the *Anti-christian Empire*, which forms a very conspicuous part of the scripture prophecies. But having wearied the reader with an afflictive subject, we shall consider those predictions in the succeeding section.

May the all-wise and gracious Spirit of God enlighten our understandings, and regenerate our hearts, that we may learn by the church the manifold wisdom of God. Amen.

SECTION VII.

PROPHESIES CONCERNING THE ANTI-CHRISTIAN EMPIRE.

Blessed is he that readeth, and they that hear the words of this prophecy, and keep those things which are written therein; for the time is at hand. REV. I. 3.

THE sacred prophecies have been generally couched in terms somewhat dark and obscure, yet not so obscure but they could animate the church with the hope of deliverance, though she could not clearly ascertain the nature, nor calculate the time of that deliverance. The veil of prophecy was not to be lifted up too far, lest it should interfere with our moral freedom, or lay open the divine counsel to evil angels. Hence the primitive fathers could not know what was intended by "the man of sin" sitting in the temple of God, or by the beast who should make war with the saints. Some of them really thought that the Anti-christ would be a great prince, who for forty-two months would bring the greatest desolation on the church. If the prophecies on this subject were open enough to guard the church against apostacy, and to support her under tedious sufferings, with the assured hope of deliverance, it was at that period quite sufficient. As

soon as the man of sin revealed his own character, he was immediately known. The court of inquisition had not been long established, before the sufferers began to make very free in bestowing the appellation of anti-christ on the Roman pontificate.—The idea was first communicated by the Waldenses. But learned men were slow in deviating from the fathers. It was not till the last century that every iota of these prophecies was applied to the clerical empire, and the application supported by authentic history. To this empire they all refer with perfect identity, and they cannot be referred to any other.

Among the great and good men who have the fairest claim to originality in the discussion of these predictions are, our Joseph Mede and Dr. Henry More. Among the French reformed ministers, Chamier, Jurieu, and Claude, deserve particular consideration. I mention them here, because they are mostly followed in the illustration of the subsequent prophecies. Providence having recently confirmed some of their comments, we may follow them with a degree of confidence which could not be done at the time they wrote.

It is now generally understood, that the prophecies contained in the ten last chapters of the Revelation, are a continuation of the prophecies of Daniel; and that Antiochus, who defiled the temple, and caused the daily sacrifice to cease for three years and a half, was an obvious type of anti-christ, who should defile the church for forty-two months, or twelve hundred and sixty years; reckoning here, as in the seventy weeks of Daniel, a year for a day. But we shall restrict our observations on this subject to the principal prophecies contained in the New Testament.

I. 2 Thess. ii. 1, 2, 3. “Now I beseech you, brethren,” says St. Paul, “by the coming of our

Lord Jesus Christ, and by our gathering together unto him, that ye be not soon shaken in mind, neither by spirit, nor by word, nor by letter as from us, that the day of Christ is at hand. Let no man deceive you by any means ;" that is by any pretended revelation from the Spirit, or letter from the apostle ; "for that day shall not come except there come a falling away first, and that man of sin be revealed, the son of Perdition." By the day of Christ is here meant, his coming in flaming fire to take vengeance on them that know not God, and obey not the gospel. By the falling away we learn, that the anti-christ was not to be an individual, but a head over the apostate church. He is called the man of sin, because his whole system of ecclesiastical polity is a gradation of tyranny, and an entire mass of corruption. He is called like Judas, the son of perdition, because for the acquisition of wealth, he betrays the interest of his master, and brings upon himself and his empire everlasting destruction.

V. 4. "Who opposeth and exalteth himself above all that is called God, or that is worshipped ; so that he as God sitteth in the temple of God." We have but to read the history of the popes to identify this prophetic character. The pontificate is enthroned in the temple or church of God, and has assumed the power of the Most High in dethroning kings, and in exalting others to the regal dignity. It has blasphemously assumed the divine prerogatives to bind and loose in heaven, and usurped authority over the dictates of conscience, and the rights of private opinion.

V. 5. "Remember ye not, that when I was yet with you, I told you these things ?" He foresaw that a spirit of insubordination to the yoke of Christ, and a love of pre-eminence, would be excited in the church, and cautioned them to watch against it.

V. 6, 7. "And now ye know what withholdeth that he might be revealed in his time ; for the mystery of iniquity doth already work ; only he who now letteth will let, until he be taken out of the way." The imperial government hindered the bishop of Rome from exercising the sovereignty which he claimed ; but when the Goths and others had divided the empire into about ten kingdoms, a way was opened for the pontificate gradually to extend its sovereignty, and unfold its character.

V. 8, 9, 10. "Then shall that wicked," or lawless pontificate, "be revealed, whom the Lord shall consume with the Spirit of his mouth, and shall destroy by the brightness of his coming : even him whose coming is after the working of Satan, with all power, and signs, and lying wonders ; and with all deceivableness of unrighteousness in them that perish, because they received not the love of the truth, that they might be saved." The clerical domination obtained its influence by imitating the policy of Satan ; some were seduced to submission by fair promises, and others were intimidated by cruel persecutions. Their high claims to universal sovereignty were supported by myriads of pretended miracles, and lying wonders. This mystery of iniquity, this deceivableness of unrighteousness, was masked under a semblance of sanctity, by which the apostate church was deceived and brought into subjection.

V. 11, 12. "For this cause God shall send them strong delusion, that they should believe a lie ; that they all might be damned who believed not the truth, but had pleasure in unrighteousness." We have here the sin and punishment of the apostate church. Having nothing of Christianity but the name, they loved not the plain apostolic preaching which struck at the root of every vice : They preferred those teachers who lectured softly on moral sub-

jects, and in the style of the pagan schools. At length, they believed not, or at least lived as though they believed not the truth. This was their sin; and God, by instructive justice, made it their punishment. After having quenched the Spirit, he abandoned them to the most deplorable superstition and error. They lived in the pleasures of pagans, believed every feigned miracle, and imagined that the priest could transact the affairs of their conscience with God. They did not love the yoke of Christ, and therefore he gave them up to the power of anti-christ, whom he will gradually consume by republishing the pure gospel, and totally destroy by the vengeance of his appearing. In this interpretation the primitive fathers nearly all concur, though they understood not the anti-christ, which seems to be the effect of pure and uniform tradition.

It should be remarked, that the whole of this prophesy is taken from Daniel's little horn, and mighty king, vii. 25. xi. 36. This will appear by comparing a few passages. "He shall speak great words against the Most High, and shall wear out the saints of the Most High, and think to change times and laws. The king shall do according to his will, and he shall exalt himself, and magnify himself above every God, and shall speak marvellous things against the God of Gods."

II. The next prophesy we shall consider respecting the anti-christ, occurs in the first epistle of Paul to Timothy, iv. 1, 2, 3. "Now, the Spirit speaketh expressly, that in the latter times some shall depart from the faith, giving heed to seducing spirits, and doctrines of devils; speaking lies in hypocrisy, having their conscience seared with a hot iron; forbidding to marry, and commanding to abstain from meats which God hath created to be received with thanksgiving." The apostacy has already been discussed, and the doctrines of demons signifies the

worship of saints and angels. The heathens termed their divinities demons, as appears from Acts xvii. 18. where the original is *strange demons*; and the apostle seems to have used the heathen term because of the similarity between pagan and Christian idolatry. The text, however, seems to have been mutilated by the advocates of image worship.—Epiphanius cites the passage against some who worship the Virgin Mary; and after the doctrines of demons he adds, for they shall be worshippers of dead men, saith the apostle, as in Israel also they were worshipped.* To give the divine sanction to worship so lucrative to the priests, they invented myriads of legendary tales concerning the miracles and wonders feigned to be performed at the shrines of the saints. By the propagation of these lies to deceive the credulous, and by cruelly persecuting, and frequently burning those who opposed them, they demonstrated that their conscience was seared with a hot iron. This professional hypocrisy they covered with the garb of continence and sanctity, and justified all their crimes by a boasted zeal for the glory of God. They abstained from lawful marriage, and some time ate nothing but bread for the space of forty days. The monks did this to attract the superstitious reverence of the populace, and the bishops imposed celibacy on the clergy, partly from the same motive, and partly because it enabled them to employ a multitude of poor priests at an easy expense. But it was principally alleged, that the priests having neither wives nor children to provide for, would be the less subject to the civil power, and the more devoted to the supremacy of the pope. After this manner, error combined with interest gained the ascendancy in the

*Advers. hæc. 78. p. 1055. tom. 1. ed. Pctav.

church; and the mystery of iniquity, which had long been working, at length boldly exalted itself above the commandments of God.

III. The principal prophecies in the book of Revelation respecting the anti-christian empire, are next to be considered. We shall begin with the two wild beasts described in the thirteenth chapter.

V. 1, 2. "And I stood upon the sand of the sea, and saw a beast rise up out of the sea, having seven heads and ten horns, and upon his horns ten crowns, and upon his heads the name of blasphemy. And the beast which I saw was like unto a leopard, and his feet were as the feet of a bear, and his mouth as the mouth of a lion; and the dragon gave him his power, and his seat, and great authority." The prophet Daniel saw four beasts ascend from the sea, diverse one from another. The first was like a lion, and represented the Babylonian empire; the second was like a bear, and represented the Persian empire; the third was like a leopard, and represented the Grecian empire. The fourth, which represented the Roman empire, was dreadful and terrible, and strong exceedingly, and it had great iron teeth; and it brake in pieces, and stamped the residue with his feet, and it was diverse from all the beasts which were before it, and it had ten horns. "I considered the horns," says he, "and behold, there came up among them another little horn, before whom there were three of the first horns plucked up by the roots. And behold in this horn there were eyes like the eyes of a man, and a mouth speaking great things," Dan. vii. 2, 8.

Daniel was extremely solicitous to know the import of his vision; and particularly to know the truth or meaning of the ten horns, and of the little horn, whose mouth spake very great things, and whose look was more stout than his fellows; for he

beheld him make war with the saints, and prevail against them.

“The ten horns,” said the interpreter, “out of this kingdom, are ten kings that shall arise. And another shall arise after them,” the little horn or pontificate, which arose from among the ten kingdoms into which the Roman empire was divided, “and he shall be diverse from the first, and he shall subdue three kings.” The papal dominions included three states, in honour of which the sovereign pontiff wore a tripple crown. “And he shall speak great words against the Most High, and shall wear out the saints of the Most High, and think to change times and laws: and they shall be given unto his hand until a time and times and the dividing of a time. But the judgment shall sit, and they shall take away his dominion, to consume and destroy it unto the end. And the kingdom and dominion, and greatness of the kingdom under the whole heaven, shall be given to the people of the saints of the Most High.”

The two beasts of St. John, in this thirteenth chapter, being a continuation of Daniel's fourth beast, and the little horn, they are here compared to illustrate the harmony of these prophecies. The first beast of St. John represents an entire view of the Roman empire for the space of about two thousand five hundred and sixty years. The pagan period, including the Christian emperors, continued about thirteen hundred years; and the little horn, or the pontificate, shall continue, calculating from its commencement, twelve hundred and sixty years. “The sea,” is the people over whom the Romans extended their conquests.

“The seven heads,” are the seven forms of government which succeeded one another in that empire: 1. Kings; 2. Consuls; 3. Decemvirs; 4. Tribunes of the people; 5. Perpetual Dictators; 6. Tri-

umvirs; 7. Emperors. The "ten horns" on the seventh or highest head, are the ten kingdoms into which the empire was divided when subdued by the Goths, the Huns, and the Vandals, in the latter part of the fifth century. 1. The states of the church, including Tuscany and Romania; 2. The Two Sicilies; 3. Lombardy, with Istria; 4. France; 5. Spain; 6. Ireland; 7. Britain; 8. Germany, south of the Elbe; 9. Pannonia, now Hungary; 10. Illyricum. "The name of blasphemy upon his heads," are the titles of the beast which belong to the Almighty, and to the Almighty only. The emperors claimed divine honours; temples were erected to their memories, and incense was offered to their geniuses. Rome styled herself the celestial and eternal city, the goddess of the earth. The titles of the pontiff are equally blasphemous; his holiness—infallible judge—vice God—God on earth—vicar of Christ. His blaspheming against them that dwell in heaven, is the paying divine homage to the holy angels and martyrs, which they abhor. "The dragon," who gave him his power and throne, is the devil, who stiles himself the prince of this world.—He instigated the pagan emperors to persecute the church; and since the eleventh century, through the advice of secular clergy, he has instigated Christian princes to do the same. Within the last seven hundred years, two or three millions of Christians have lost their lives for bearing their testimony against the corruptions of popery. "The head wounded to death and healed again," is the imperial head, which was wounded by the Goths, Huns and Vandals, but healed, in some sort, when Charles the great was proclaimed emperor of the Romans, or when Justinian received the imperial dignity.

But Jurieu has given another opinion concerning the healing of the deadly wound, which I pre-

fer. He says, that the wound was healed when the ten Christian kings were deceived by the clergy to acknowledge the bishop of Rome as sovereign pontiff. In this view, "all the world wondered after the beast. And they worshipped the dragon, which gave power to the beast, saying, who is like unto the beast? who is able to make war with him?" By this submitting to the temporal and spiritual tyranny of Rome, they in reality forsook the Lord, and did homage to the devil.

V. 7, 8. "And power was given him over all kindreds, and tongues, and nations. And all that dwell on earth shall worship him, whose names are not written in the book of life of the Lamb slain from the foundation of the world." This is not true of the German empire; but it is really true, that the Christian world in general submitted to the pontificate. "And power was given unto him to continue forty and two months." This is exactly the same as the duration of Daniel's little horn, twelve hundred and sixty days, which, according to the manner of calculating prophesy, implies so many years. Then he shall surely be destroyed. "He that leadeth into captivity, shall go into captivity. He that killeth with the sword, must be killed with the sword. Here is the patience, and the faith of the saints."

IV. We shall next proceed to St. John's two horned beast, which is expressly descriptive of the pontificate.

Rev. ch. xiii. 11. "And I beheld another beast coming up out of the earth, and he had two horns like a lamb, and he spake as a dragon." The clerical empire rose out of the earth, as a wild beast leaves his den in the dark, and arrived at the highest glory and power: the two horns represent the two swords, or their temporal and spiritual power.

The decretals or bulls of the church illustrate this; they are issued in the high tone of superior majesty.

V. 12. "He exerciseth all the power of the first beast before him, and causeth the earth, and them which dwell therein, to worship the first beast, whose deadly wound was healed." Pagan Rome endeavoured to subjugate all nations to her unlimited control, and Christian Rome has endeavoured by every means to do the same. She has healed the wounded imperial power by presiding as the queen mother over her ten reigning sons.

V. 13. "And he doth great wonders, so that he maketh fire to come down from heaven on the earth in the sight of men." The pope, and the princes of the church, represent the sun and stars of heaven, and his anathemas have frequently set whole kingdoms in a flame of discord and war.

V. 14. "And deceiveth them, by means of those miracles, saying to them that dwell on the earth, that they should make an image to the beast, which had the wound by a sword and did live." The pontificate is but an image of the ancient Roman power. The emperors had their senators, generals, prefects, and governors; and the popes have their cardinals, legates, metropolitans, and bishops.—These are the princes of the anti-christian empire, who have "power to give life unto the image of the beast; that the image of the beast should speak, in lying and ambiguous oracles, as well as the images in the pagan temples; and they have power to cause as many as would not worship the image of the beast, should be killed." The accomplishment of this prophesy is sufficiently obvious from the wars of extermination which the pontificate has prosecuted against all who would not submit to its tyranny; and from the cruel and bloody procedures of the courts of inquisition. Indeed, so rigorous and

cruel have been those proceedings, that they have caused "all, both small and great, rich and poor, free and bond, to receive a mark in their right hand, or in their foreheads." As the slaves had their master's mark, so the catholics have been compelled to receive badges of slavery; they have been compelled to receive the cross and the chrism on their forehead; they carry the crucifix, rosary and chapelet in their right hand, and on pain of damnation, are obliged to confess, at least once a year, to their proper priest.* Surely these are badges of slavery!

V. 17, 18. "And that no man might buy or sell, save he that had the mark, or the name of the beast, or the number of his name. Here is wisdom. Let him that hath understanding count the number of the beast; for it is the number of a man; and his number is six hundred, threescore and six." Nothing can be more striking than the application of this prophesy to the pontificate: in all its decretals it has prohibited the catholics, on pain of excommunication, to have any intercourse with heretics. With regard to the number of the beast, the good Irenæus affirms, on the testimony of persons who had conversed with St. John, that it was to be found in the numerical letters of his name. He adduces the Greek ΑΑΤΕΙΝΟΣ, which exactly gives that number, from which he infers that the anti-christ was to be of the Latin church.† But it should also be remarked, that the numerical letters in the pope's favorite title, Vicarius dei generalis in terris, contain the same number.‡

* Du Pin's Ecc. His. Lateran Coun. 1215.

† Euseb. Hist. Ecc. lib. v. cap. viii.

‡ In the sixteenth century, our reformers frequently place the name of Louis, or LUDOVICVS, opposite this text, which gives the number 666.

	V — 5	G — 0	T — 0
	I — 1	E — 0	E — 0
A — 30	C — 100	N — 0	R — 0
A — 1	A — 0	E — 0	R — 0
T — 300	R — 0	R — 0	I — 1
E — 5	I — 1	A — 0	S — 0
I — 10	U — 5	L — 50	—
N — 50	S — 0	I — 1	1
O — 70	D — 500	S — 0	613
Σ — 200	E — 0	I — 1	52
	I — 1	N — 0	
<hr/>	<hr/>	<hr/>	<hr/>
666	613	52	666

V. In the seventeenth and eighteenth chapters of this book, we have a very figurative description of the anti-christian empire, and of its destruction.— But the Holy Spirit saw it meet to disguise the representation, under the mystic name of Babylon.— Had the description been more open, it would have made a premature exposure of the divine council, and might have occasioned the suppression of those scriptures which are here considered.

V. 3, 4. “And I saw a woman sit upon a scarlet coloured beast, full of names of blasphemy, having seven heads, and ten horns. And the woman was arrayed in purple, and scarlet colour, and decked with gold, and precious stones, and pearls, having a golden cup in her hand, full of abominations and filthiness of her fornication.” The empires of the earth are represented by beasts, but the church is frequently represented by a woman. Hence, this woman is the harlot church presiding over the empire, and having the ten kings reined at her command. The scarlet, purple, gold, and jewels, in which she is dressed, represent the splendor of the papal court, which has aggrandized itself by every species of ecclesiastic corruption. The golden cup, full of intoxicating wine, is expressive of the pomp

and majesty with which Rome asserts its dignity, and conducts its worship, and of the fascinating effects which it has upon the people. They wonder after the beast, and are dazzled with the decorations of their mother. But the Most High God, who seeks his temple in the humble heart, abominates this deceit and pride. The vulgate translation, used by the papists, reads, *poculum aureum plenum abominatione*, and the first letters of these words make Papa: if this was intended by the Holy Spirit, as Jurieu thinks, the author of these corruptions is published by name. The name, however, is sufficiently marked in the following verse by four luminous characters.

V. 5. "And upon the forehead was a name, written, Mystery—Babylon the great—the mother of harlots—and abomination of the earth." When the duke de Montmorency was at Rome, he learned, on good authority, that this term—"mystery," was written on the pope's diadem, and that it was erased on account of this text. This term is understood to be of the same import as St. Paul's mystery of iniquity, which began to work very early in the church. And it is a mystery of the profoundest nature, that so much ambition and wickedness should be couched under the garb of humble sanctity; that the pontiff should call himself the servant of servants, and yet retain the title of *Vice Deo*.

Rome is here denominated *Babylon*; because, as that haughty empire captivated the apostate Israelites, and demolished their temple; so the pontificate has extended its sovereignty over the apostate church, and defaced the superstructure raised by the apostles. Likewise, as God preserved Israel in captivity, and brought them back after seventy years to rebuild his city and sanctuary, so he has preserved a people in the corrupt and tyrannical church to revive and reform his pure religion; and

at the expiration of the 1260 years, he will complete their emancipation, and destroy the empire of their enemies.

Concerning the two remaining names, we need but add, that as a woman renders her character infamous by leaving a faithful husband and becoming a prostitute, so this church, by bowing to idols, has in reality forsaken the Lord, and rendered herself detestable by innumerable idolatries and crimes.

V. 6. "And I saw the woman drunk with the blood of the saints, and with the blood of the martyrs of Jesus, and when I saw her I wondered with great admiration." In her intoxication, she thought to have secured her revenues and honours by branding the saints with the appellation of heretics, and by exterminating them; but it developed her real character, and caused the world to hate her. We have but to read the history of the crusades she published against the Waldenses, Albigenses, and others; the history of her inquisitions and massacres; of her bloody wars and executions in every nation, to identify the object of this prophecy. St. John did not wonder that the heathen dragon should persecute the church, but he wondered with great admiration that this woman should destroy millions of the children she professed to nourish.

V. 7, 8, 9. "And the angel said unto me, wherefore didst thou marvel? I will tell thee the mystery of the woman, and of the beast that carrieth her, which hath the seven heads and ten horns. The beast which thou sawest was, and is not; and shall ascend out of the bottomless pit, and go into perdition. The seven heads are seven mountains, on which the woman sitteth." We have here a positive declaration, that the ambition of the apostate clergy, to enthrone themselves over the empire, proceeded from the bottomless pit, and that both them and their idolatries shall go into perdition, and rise no

more. That Rome is here intended, appears from the seven hills on which the city is built.

V. 10, 11. "And there are seven kings ; five are fallen, and one is, and the other is not yet come, and when he cometh he must continue a short space. And the beast that was, and is not, even he is the eighth, and is of the seven, and goeth into perdition." The five fallen kings or heads are, the kings, the consuls, the dictators, the decemvirs, and the tribunes. The sixth, who existed when John wrote, was the emperors. The seventh was the Christian emperors, when Constantine removed the government from Rome to Constantinople : though this form still retained the same name it was upon the whole attended with a thorough change. The triumvirate is not reckoned here, because it was a confusion rather than a government. The eighth is the pontificate, who also is of the seventh head, for he gradually invaded the emperor's rights in the assumption of temporal power.

V. 12. "And the ten horns which thou sawest are ten kings, which have received no kingdom as yet ; but receive power as kings one hour with the beast." This text illustrates St. Paul's mystery of iniquity, or the clerical ambition to reign over the apostate church. The imperial power let or restrained the ambition of the man of sin. But the annihilation of the imperial name by Odoacer, in the year 475, favoured the assumed sovereignty of the Roman pontiff, and it afforded the kingdoms, about ten in number, an opportunity to assert their independence. Hence it is said, that they received their power in one or the same hour with the pontifical beast. But it was not till several ages after the year 475, that the pontificate had opportunity to exercise its sovereignty over the nations ; and that period not being distinctly marked in history, all attempts to fix the commencement of the 1260

years are, in my judgment, presumption. Secondly, v. 13. The ten kings "have one mind, and shall give their power and strength unto the beast." That is, they shall be of one religion, and through fraud and force shall yield to the assuming claims of the pontificate. Thirdly, v. 14. "These shall make war with the Lamb." By lending their armies to fight against heretics, as they termed the saints, the catholic kings really fought against Christ, and exterminated their best subjects. Fourthly, "the Lamb shall overcome them ; for he is Lord of lords, and King of kings." The reigning families who once persecuted the reformed church having been all dethroned, or greatly humbled, what shall we say to these mysterious visitations ? Do the 1260 years of bondage happily draw to a close ?

V. 16, 17. "These" ten kingdoms "shall hate the whore, and shall make her desolate and naked, and shall eat her flesh, and burn her with fire ; for God hath put into their hearts to fulfil his will ; and to agree, and give their kingdom unto the beast, until the words of God shall be fulfilled." The deceived sovereigns and people shall at length be enlightened, and rise up against their deceivers. They shall strip the clergy of those titles which humble men cannot receive ; sell their monasteries and lands ; spoil her spiritual traffic, and destroy her by war, in the same manner as she destroyed the saints. The present awful war appears to design the pillage of the church.

VI. In the eighteenth chapter, an angel came down from heaven, and proclaimed the fall of mystic Babylon, much in the same words as Isaiah predicted the fall of ancient Babylon, Isa. xiii. 21. And another angel cried from heaven, saying, "come out of her, my people, that ye be not partakers of her sins, and that ye receive not of her plagues ; for her sins have reached unto heaven,

and God hath remembered her iniquities." From these words we learn, that God hath had a people in Babylon, who have mourned for her corruptions; and that the reformers, when these corruptions were forced on their consciences, had no alternative but to separate or become partakers of her sins. Indeed, through ignorance, and for want of intrepid reformers, they were partially contaminated with her depravity.

V. 6. "Reward her even as she rewarded you, and double unto her double, according to her works; in the cup which she hath filled fill to her double." When Louis XIV. had ascended the throne of France, he was persuaded by the clergy to revoke the edict of Nantz in favor of the reformed churches. They urged the necessity of the whole kingdom being of one religion; and that it was in reality accounting his majesty a heretic to differ from him in religious worship. An edict was consequently published, which enjoined the protestant ministers to quit the kingdom in fifteen days, or be hanged. Many of the fugitive pastors were detained in the frontier towns till the time was expired, and then executed. Those protestants who had property were obliged to deliver up their shops, warehouses, and estates, to the papists, and labour for their bread; for they could neither be postillions nor waggoners, unless they embraced the catholic religion. When they assembled in the woods or on the mountains to worship, the soldiers frequently pursued and slaughtered them without mercy; or if, on some occasions, prisoners were brought in, one part was hanged, and another sent to the galleys. The soldiers were quartered on their houses in great numbers, and they consumed their property, and treated the weaker branches of their families with indignities which cannot be named. But God, at length, has completed the visitation of these crimes; for he is a jealous God, visiting the

iniquities of the fathers upon the children unto the third and fourth generation. This persecution commenced in the year 1685 ; and in 1789 the revolution took place in France, which ruined the nobility and clergy, whose fathers occasioned these calamities to the protestants. They have lost their titles, their estates, and an immense number of them have lost their lives too. They have been banished in beggary to those very nations to which their fathers compelled the protestants to fly. Never was there a more striking instance of the divine retribution !

The prophetic scene of this destruction closes with the elegies of her friends, and the songs of the martyrs. V. 9. "The kings of the earth," who are attached to her interest at the time of her destruction, "shall bewail her, and lament for her, when they shall see the smoke of her burning.— And the merchants of the earth shall weep and mourn over her, for no man buyeth her merchandize any more : the merchandize of gold, and silver, and precious stones, and pearls, and fine linen, and purple, and silk, and scarlet, and the souls of men," &c. Yes, the priests, who have long traded for human souls in pardons and indulgences, shall weep and mourn when the light of revelation and literature shall have consumed her traffic.

On the other hand it is said, v. 20, 21. "Rejoice over her, thou heaven, and ye holy apostles and prophets, for God hath avenged you on her. And a mighty angel took up a stone like a great mill-stone, and cast it into the sea, saying, thus with violence shall that great city Babylon be thrown down, and shall be found no more at all."

We have now traced the rise, splendor, and fall, of the apostate and harlot church, dignified with the titles, and arrayed in the pomp, of this vain world. She has made the nations drunk with her

intoxicating cup of idolatry and superstition: she says, "I sit a queen, and shall see no sorrow."—But the chaste spouse of Christ presents the believer with a different mien. According to the predictions of her Lord, reproach, affliction, and poverty, have generally been her lot. Her fine raiment, has been her righteousness; and her brilliant crown, her apostles and martyrs. Let us hasten to view her promised exaltation from obscurity, to the lustre of meridian glory and universal dominion. This subject requires here a copious consideration, because the time is near, and it adds to our comfort, by disclosing the growing evidences of the truth of our most holy religion.

SECTION VIII.

OF THE SECOND AND UNIVERSAL SPREAD OF THE GOSPEL.

Is it possible that God, who foretold to a year, and very clearly, the deliverance of Israel from their Egyptian bondage, their return from the Babylonian captivity, the building of the second temple, and the death of the Messiah, should have been silent, or not have spoken as clearly concerning his coming to destroy the destroyers, and set up his kingdom?

FLETCHER.

REAL piety, during the predominancy of anti-christ, has prophesied in sackcloth, or been concealed like embers among the ashes; and if at any period it kindled into the enlightening flame of reformation, the clergy were wanting in no efforts of fraud or force to exterminate the rising sect. Our most voluminous martyrologists are unable to acquaint us with the numbers which have been burnt, hanged, and slaughtered in the different nations of Europe. God's faithful witnesses have been slain in all parts of the harlot city, and their dead bodies have lain in the streets. They embarrassed their enemies after their death, for they could not bu-

ry them: their works and piety would still speak to the confusion of error and vice.

I. The grand instance, in which the flame broke forth into permanent reform, and glowed with ardor, which increased by opposition, occurred in Saxony. The foundation of St. Peter's church was laid at Rome early in the fifteenth century; and the money, for erecting this magnificent edifice, was raised throughout Europe by the sale of indulgences: but the house of God should not have been built with the wages of unrighteousness.

Martin Luther, a zealous and intrepid monk, was moved by the spirit of God to preach and write against this shameful traffic. In this he was ably supported by Melancthon, Bullinger, Brentius, and others. All Germany interested themselves in the controversy, and for the most part in favor of the reformers. The struggle was great and hazardous; and it terminated in the emancipation of the north of Europe from the papal tyranny.

From the bold and animating sermons of the Saxon reformers, the still surviving friends of Valdo in France and Switzerland, of Wickliff in England, of Huss in Bohemia, were quickly rekindled with the flame of ecclesiastical reform. A considerable number of able men were raised up in each of these countries, to preach and write against the errors and corruptions of the papal church. After a long and severe, contest which produced a cloud of genuine martyrs, they completely succeeded in removing idolatry from the sanctuary, and in adorning it, in some degree, with the graces of regeneration. Protestants, now, do not sufficiently consider the gratitude which is due to the memories of those faithful men. Had it not been for their bold and disinterested exertions, we might at this day, have been bargaining with priests and saints for salvation, instead of receiving it as the gift of God through Jesus Christ.

In France, the reformation was embraced by two millions of the people. It could boast of a cloud of the ablest ministers; among whom, Du Moulin, Mestrezat, Daillé, Du Bose, Drellingcourt, Claude, and Allix, are names which deserve particular consideration. But their cause was almost extinguished by the revocation of the edict of Nantz. The priests hated them not only on account of their religion, but because they had placed Henry IV. on the throne of France; and, on his death, they involved them in calamities scarcely to be equalled by the severities of the Roman persecutions.

We have also to regret, that the reformers were not more united in their religious opinions. The Lutherans were accused by the Calvinists of compromising the doctrine of transubstantiation with the catholics, by affirming that the real body of Christ was present in the bread and wine. In England, they were equally unhappy. One party wished to model the church after the simplicity of the primitive Christians, and on that account were denominated *Puritans*. The other party wished to retain the pomp of robes, mitres, and titles; and to suppress only the supremacy of the pope, and all the idolatrous parts of the mass. The latter gained the ascendancy, and constitute our present national church. We lament that they did not carry the reform a little further: it would have promoted a greater harmony of religious worship, stopped the ridicule of infidels, and relieved conscientious men of some scruples they feel in taking the subscription oath to the thirty-nine articles of faith.

II. But the revival of genuine piety in the hearts of the people is as essentially connected with the universal spread of the gospel as the reformation. Indeed, if that be not kept in view, the reformers have lost sight of their principal object. It is not

sufficient to clear away the rubbish : the sanctuary must be consecrated with the divine presence, and the fire kept burning on the altar. On this subject I am happy to observe, that every protestant nation can boast of a number of celebrated ministers and laymen, who have made it their peculiar study and care to do good. Some of those ministers have seen considerable revivals of religion in the congregations in which they have laboured, and they have endeavoured to revive it throughout their country by a variety of excellent writings. Others have been successful among the religious sects ; and it does not appear, from an impartial review of their conduct, that they were actuated by any motives but those of piety and zeal for the glory of God.

While treating of revivals, it would be incompatible with Christian charity, did we omit the work of God among the Roman Catholics. For several ages past, a considerable number of people, and many of them people of quality, have endeavoured, in their way, to revive vital godliness in that community. Some of them have suffered very great persecution for these endeavours, which at least demonstrates the sincerity of their piety. This great, though almost secret work, has been promoted chiefly by the circulation of spiritual books ; which, however erroneous on some important articles of faith, are peculiarly happy in treating of self-denial, of communion with God, and of the insufficiency of worldly happiness.

III. We shall next consider some of the principal efforts which have been made to propagate the gospel among the heathen. About the year 1522, Ignatius Loyola, a Spanish nobleman, quitted the profession of arms, and devoted himself to the conversion of the Mahometans and idolaters in every part of the world. His benevolent heart was ex-

panded with love to all mankind, and he was roused to jealousy for the honour of God, by seeing the mariners in the new trade to India suffer so much for the acquisition of wealth, and nothing done by the Christians for the conversion of the heathen.—With a view to acquire assistance in this laudable work, he came to the university of Paris. After a while, several priests were converted by his labours, and heartily acquiesced in his design.—These were constituted into a society, and denominated “the company of Jesus;” that is, the *Jesuits*. If some of this order have been deemed the most insidious men that ever existed, I am really of opinion, that Loyola and his first disciples were men of deep piety, and actuated with the noblest motive which can possibly inspire the heart of man. Their industry and perseverance, their sufferings and patience, their zeal and success in their respective missions, though not equal to all that fame has recorded, were doubtless admirably great.

The celebrated Francis Xavier was among the earliest converts of Ignatius. This truly apostolic man, disregarding the dignity of his birth, made himself poor for the kingdom of God. He attended the hospitals, and performed the meanest offices for the sick. When proposed with two more for the mission to India, he embraced it with a warm heart, and persevered with invincible patience and zeal. From the year 1541 to 1552, he acquired a great variety of languages, and with very few assistants taught and baptized an incredible number of heathens. His mission commenced at the isle of Goa, and extended along the coasts, and to all the islands of Indostan, and as far, as the islands of Japan. His heart was chiefly fixed on the empire of China, which is said to contain three hundred millions of people; but, like Moses, he was only permitted to see the land. He died in a hut in an island near

Canton, whither he was going to preach. But God did not lose sight of the faith and prayers of his servant.

Early in the sixteenth century, Matthew Ricci, a Jesuit of Margaretà, near Ancona, with two colleagues of the same order, penetrated into China, in the character of European philosophers. His colleagues soon left him, and he laboured alone for eighteen years. By his skill in the mathematics he became so acceptable to the Chinese nobility, and even to their emperor, that he obtained, both for himself and his associates, the liberty of explaining to the people the doctrines of Christianity. Their success, considering the small number of labourers, was almost incredible, and it extended to the principal cities of the empire.

Ricci was very much disposed to favour the converts in all the customs of the Chinese which were not directly opposite to the laws of Christ. He went so far as to allow them to comply with the laws of the empire in bowing to the statue of Confucius, on being assured that nothing was intended by it but civil homage.

The infant churches continued to flourish and enjoy repose till the death of the first Tartar emperor, whose successor was Cang-hi, a minor. During the minority, the regency and nobles conspired to exterminate the Christian religion. They asserted, in a proclamation, that the Christian doctrines were false; that they were inimical to the interests of the empire; and that they should not be professed on pain of death. A severe persecution ensued through all the provinces. But the young emperor, coming to the throne, restored the peace of the churches.

Another company of missionaries penetrated to the islands of Japan; and providence enabled them to surmount the difficulties arising from the language, and the opposition of the idolatrous priests. Chris-

tianity flourished in this kingdom for seventy years, and could boast of a hundred thousand converts.— But it is feared that the later missionaries gave too much countenance to a rebellion which broke out, and terminated in the total extermination of the church.

In South America, these Jesuits, having established a mission on the northern shore of the river Plate, taught and baptized three hundred thousand families. They laid out the country in plantations, instructed their converts in agriculture, which copiously supplied their wants. If all this be regarded merely as a work of civilization, it commands our admiration, and it ameliorated the condition of a people made completely wretched by the sword of the Spaniards. In short, the Jesuits extended their missions, and with more or less success, to all the colonial dominions of France, Spain, and Portugal. What a reproach is this to the indolence of protestant nations, who, as yet, have done but little for the heathens.

A respectable society has long been formed in London, and in Copenhagen, and in Edinburgh, for propagating the gospel in foreign parts. Some of the first Danish missionaries used their utmost endeavours to instruct the Hindoos; but their successors seemed to have considered themselves as gentlemen rather than labourers. It is to be regretted, that most of the men sent out by these laudable societies, should have been totally destitute of the spirit of Xavier, Brainard, and Swartz.

The Moravian brethren have been peculiarly happy in selecting missionaries formed for fatigue, and patient of hardships and labour. They have possessed a zeal which could neither be extinguished by the cold of Greenland, nor awed by the fevers of the torrid zone. These industrious men have frequently subsisted on food which the poor-

est man in this country would not taste. The manner in which they institute religious societies is very confined, yet they have succeeded among the Indians in various parts of North America, and have made them happy in the enjoyment of knowledge, piety, and every temporal comfort.

In 1784, the Rev. Dr. Coke, going to the United States of North America, and in company with Messrs. Whatcoat and Vasey, was driven by a tempest to Antigua. They preached to the people, and engaged to establish a mission in that island. Since then, they have sent out above thirty ministers and young men; and though their labours have been greatly obstructed by the infidel principles and great wickedness of the planters, and by a long and afflictive war, yet their labours have been crowned with a success in Antigua, St. Christophers, Nevis, St. Vincents, Dominica, Jamaica, New Providence, and other smaller islands, which has astonished the world. The number of their members amounts to upwards of thirteen thousand; and the number of the negroes, the coloured people, and the whites, who receive instructions, amounts to seventy thousand. In all these islands, they have built lodgings and houses for the missionaries, and large chapels for the congregations. But the most hopeful object of this mission lies in the astonishing talents of some of the negroes for preaching and prayer. The doctor awaits but an opportunity to assist those men in conveying back to their native shores of Africa, the glad-tidings of salvation by Jesus Christ.

About fifteen years ago, two Baptist missionaries found their way in Danish bottoms, to India. They established a college, a printing-office, and a church, at Serampore, in Bengal. The Missionary Society sent over since four young men in 1800 to their assistance, with 10,000 copies of the New Testament in the Bengalee. They have made a slow

but sure progress ; for their industry and excellent spirit will ensure success. They have established a small church at Dinngepore, Calcutta, Jessore, Cutwa, &c. &c. and ordained many of the converted natives to the ministry. They have likewise, by their press, laid down a plan of diffusing the sacred writings, and the knowledge of Christ, on all the shores of the Ganges. But their chief difficulty arises from the *four casts* into which the natives are divided. On embracing Christianity the Hindoo loses his *cast*, and his nearest relations regard him as an exile. Hence, there seems no remedy at present, but to form a fifth, or *Christian cast*. Should the gospel once obtain in a general way, it would, in every view, better the condition of the Indostan nations. They are deeply immersed in superstition and vice. The young people dance and sing, surrounded with the aged, who apparently are pining away with hunger. Among the married, it is estimated that not more than one in fifty escapes the crime of adultery. What a work of Benevolence to send among them the glory of the gospel, and a superior system of morality ! And we may augur from experiment, that neither the Alcoran of Mahomet, nor the Bedas of the Hindoos, will keep their ground against the lustre of the Bible, when interpreted by the life of faithful mission.

The missionary flame is at length revived, and promises to extend its divine influence to every nation of the earth. Twenty-nine missionaries sailed in the ship *Duff* in 1796, and arrived at Otaheite, after a passage the most safe and speedy ever known ; and though the society may have to regret the failure of this mission in a great degree, and the too great *clat* with which it was conducted, they have nevertheless the consolation to see their mission to Caffraria, under Dr. Vanderkemp, conducted with the most promising success. And it is

hoped that similar success will crown the Scotch mission in the northern vicinity of the Caspian sea.

Correspondent to missionary efforts, are the Bible societies now established in London, Copenhagen, Berlin, Basle, Nurenberg, and several parts of the Austrian empire. In particular, the London Bible society, exclusive of the vast editions it has circulated at home and abroad, has granted types and paper for 5000 copies of the New Testament in the Turkish language at Karass or rather Karasou, in the Crimea. It is printing a large edition of the Bible in Arabic at home; and it is aiding Dr. Buchanan to print, at the College of Fort William, in Bengal, ten editions of the Bible, in all the principal languages of the east. Specimens have already been received of the Bibles printed in the Shanscrit and Chinese. Every Christian should, therefore, regard those societies as the great engines of heaven, aided by the invention of Stereotype, to Bible the world, and to afford efficacious aid in the universal spread of the gospel.

IV. It is further observed, that the political changes which have recently taken place in the earth, seem highly favourable to the enlargement of the Redeemer's kingdom. Many have noticed the peace which prevailed in the great Roman empire at our Saviour's birth, and extolled the wisdom of providence which chose that pacific period for the propagation of the faith. In this view, the great Russian empire exhibits a very favourable appearance for the Greek church to spread the gospel in the east. That empire has extended itself to the Caspian sea, to the confines of China, and to the northern and eastern extremities of the continent. Including all variety of soil and climate, of vegetable and mineral productions, it has a vast commerce within itself. The way is therefore open for civilization, literature, and the gospel of peace, to go hand in hand through all the provinces of northern Asia.

The Mahometan empire, so long the scourge of the church, is now crumbling to pieces. Many of the Pachas, by asserting their independence, have so enfeebled the body, that it cannot move its enormous limbs. The fall of this empire will have a happy tendency to emancipate the long captive church, and the diffusion of knowledge to raise it above superstition, that the candlestick may once more give light to the eastern world.

The commercial and colonial influence of the European nations, which annually increases, is another inviting circumstance to send missionaries to the heathen. The way is as open as we could reasonably expect it; and the work is opposed by none of the sovereigns of Europe. The colonies enrich us with their best productions; and if we make no efforts to impart unto them the true riches, we shall be altogether inexcusable in the sight of God, and prove to the infidels at home, that we do not believe the religion we profess.

V. I am aware that sober-minded Christians would not wish to go before the Lord, but like prompt and faithful servants, they would acquiesce in the intimations of his will. It really appears to me, not only from the preceding considerations on the favourable state of the world for this work, but from the apparent accomplishment of several prophecies, that this is really the time. The two thousand three hundred days; that is, years of Daniel, for the God of heaven to set up an everlasting kingdom, and cleanse the sanctuary, are expired, or nearly so, Dan. viii. 13, 14. Likewise, the fall of the tenth part of the city by a great earthquake, and the slaughter of the seven thousand men, seems to have been strikingly accomplished by the French revolution. Their bidding defiance to the powers of the pontificate was sudden and unexpected as an earthquake, and attended with the slaughter of more

than a million men. The aggrandizement of this empire, and the titles assumed by Buonaparte, emperor of France, and king of Italy, are declarations to the world, that the temporal powers of the pope exist no more. There need be no more disputes about the doctrine of the two swords. His holiness, now, is of little more consequence to the church, than that of a degraded priest granting absolution to the crimes of France. The reformed churches have uniformly considered this empire as that tenth part of the city, and it is sufficiently evident they were not mistaken, for none of the protestant nations were emancipated with such great political commotions. This great empire, situated in the centre of the catholic community, having abolished all persecution for religious sentiments ; having annihilated the tyrannical parts of the clerical power, and exposed relics, images, and every priestly artifice, to the utmost degradation, must thereby have applained the way for the total destruction of idolatry, and afforded a favourable moment for Christianity in France, Italy, and Spain, to assume her primitive character of purity and love.

It is further observed, that during the great earthquake, in which Babylon should drink of the fierceness of God's wrath, that the great city should be divided into three parts, Rev. xvi. 13, 19. And the ancient papal empire, at this moment, strikingly exhibits a triple division : that is, *catholics*, *protestants* and *infidels*. Their number is nearly equal ; and what three descriptions of men can be more opposite in principles and views ? Within one age after Luther, the reformation completely rent off a third part. In the last age, learned men have idolized human reason, and exalted it above revelation. This rash and daring progress of infidelity has been accelerated by the pious frauds, and impious lives of those, who ought to have adorned the sanctuary

with their wisdom and virtues. Hence, Jesus Christ, the prophets, and the apostles, have been associated with these anti-christian priests, and the whole of them ridiculed as a succession of wretches and impostors. This is the natural consequence of combining error and superstition, with the truth and simplicity of the gospel. The gold is cast away with the dross. Hence but one part, properly speaking, now remains attached to the anti-christian see. Here we adore the wisdom of providence, which obliges those very men, who speak so contumeliously of the sacred writers, to confer upon them the highest honour by accomplishing their predictions, in a manner so striking and correct.

VI. We proceed to illustrate two more prophecies, which seem farther to indicate, that this is the time for the universal spread of the gospel. "The son of man shall send his angels," or ministers, "with a great sound of a trumpet, and they shall gather together his elect from the four winds, from one end of the heaven to the other," Matt. xxiv. 31. "I saw an angel," says John, "fly in the midst of heaven, having the everlasting gospel to preach unto them that dwell on the earth, and to every nation, and kindred, and tongue, and people, saying with a loud voice, fear God, and give glory unto him; for the hour of his judgment is come; and worship him that made heaven and earth, and the sea, and the fountains of water. And there followed another angel, saying, Babylon is fallen, is fallen," &c. Rev. xiv. 6, 7, 8. From these and other correspondent passages, we derive information of a very important and consolatory nature: 1. that the gospel shall be preached in every nation and language: 2. that it shall be preached amid the four winds or commotions and wars which shall agitate the whole world: 3. that the holy angels shall superintend the missions, and influence the pagans to renounce

their idols, and to worship the God who made the heavens and the earth : 4. that this shall be effectuated previously to the total fall of papal Babylon. But we have four or five visions in the Revelation of the fall of this empire, which seem to intimate that it should fall at so many different periods.— And it has fallen at different periods in Germany, England, and France. What further signs and evidences can we ask, that this is the time to propagate the gospel, than to see the fall of popery, and the way so extensively appained to send missionaries abroad? Can it, in a moral view, be too early to save the heathen from the most horrid and abominable vices? or can they ever receive the gospel without exertion and expense?

VII. The ways and means by which religion shall be revived at home, and propagated abroad, are also predicted. The Spirit of life from God shall enter into his two faithful witnesses, and they shall be exalted to heaven, and in the presence of their enemies, Rev. xi. 1—12. They are called God's two witnesses, because that number is competent for evidence in the courts of justice; but they comprehend the great cloud and succession of witnesses who have prophesied in sackcloth during the ages of anti-christ. They have been massacred in every country of Europe, and their dead bodies treated with horrible indignities. The extermination of heretics has been celebrated by jubilees at Rome, and by great rejoicings among the papal princes. Their situation, however, shall be completely reversed. After three days and a half; that is, about the expiration of the twelve hundred and sixty years, the Lord shall raise up abundance of ministers in the spirit of the holy martyrs; and they shall be exalted to heaven, or exceedingly honoured for their wisdom, piety, and labours. From ministers so peculiarly endowed with the spirit of

faith and love, we may expect a success in the propagation of the gospel, correspondent to the prophecies concerning the latter day's glory of the church. The work at first will, of course, be arduous and slow, but having once obtained, the "handful of corn" will multiply to an abundant harvest, Psalm lxxii.

VIII. The missionaries will not have proceeded far with their work among the heathens, before God will afford his church extraordinary consolation and aid by the call and conversion of the Jews. All their hopes are founded upon prophecy, and from prophecy alone will they receive conviction.—Whenever they have a prospect, that the Gentile world will receive the faith of Christ, they will perceive that providence is about to establish the Christian expositions of those prophecies, and to refute the expositions of their rabbins. To evidence, so divine and strong, they cannot but acquiesce, and shame to be the last to do homage to their king.—Hitherto this work has been obstructed by the immorality of the Christian world. But being wearied, on the one hand, with their misguided expectations of a temporal Messiah, and perceiving, on the other, the success of the gospel among the heathen, their ancient prejudices will vanish. The veil, which is upon their hearts, when Moses and the prophets are read, shall be taken away. They will see their scriptures full of this important truth, that the Messiah was to be "cut off, and his soul made an offering for sin, before he was to see his seed, to prolong his days, and before the pleasure of the Lord was to prosper in his hand," Isa. liii.

The dispersion of the Jews, and their preservation, as a distinct people, exhibit a grand and instructive scheme of providence. According to the prediction of Moses, they are scattered on the face of the whole earth, from under one end of heaven to the other, Deut. xxviii. 64. They have reject-

ed the prophet of whom he spake, and therefore the Lord hath cut them off from the land which he gave to their fathers. They demonstrate, among all nations, the sad consequences of making light of the gospel, and rejecting the Messiah. But the judgments of God have mercy for the object. The tedious winter shall be succeeded by a reviving spring. When "the times of the Gentiles are fulfilled," they shall return to their own land, and the Gentiles shall become his own people. "If they abide not still in unbelief, God is able to graft them in again. Blindness, in part, is happened to Israel, until the fulness of the Gentiles be come in. And so all Israel shall be saved in the day of the Lord," Rom. xi. 25, 26.

From the manner in which God has preserved his ancient people, we cannot but think, he designs them to contribute their share in the establishment of his kingdom of righteousness. Resident or wandering among all commerical nations, and perfectly acquainted with their habits, religions, and languages, they want but "the residue of the Spirit," to constitute them an army of missionaries. Their situation is peculiarly happy for promoting the conversion of many nations on the shores of Asia and Africa. When that is the case, "Ethiopia," the country of black people, "shall soon stretch out her hands unto God," Psal. lxxviii. 31. Of this we may be confident, that whenever it shall please the Almighty to pour out his Spirit upon his servants and hand-maidens, the Jews, their sermons will not be luke-warm, but animating and powerful, like those of St. Paul. The whole Christian church will be revived by the work, and filled with acclamations of joy and thanksgiving. "If the casting away of Israel were the reconciling of the world" by the conversion of the Gentiles, "what shall

the receiving of them be but life from the dead?" Rom. xi. 15.

IX. Whenever the Jews shall return to the Lord, the Lord will return to them, and restore them to their own country, which he hath sworn to give them for an everlasting possession. It is apparent from the sixteenth chapter of the Revelation, that during the latter period of the papal empire, God shall pour out the seven vials of his wrath upon the wicked. Five of these, it is presumed by our best writers, have already been poured out. The sixth is to fall on the Euphrates ; that is, on the Mahometan empire ; and it will probably open the way for the Jews to return to their land. Be that as it may, when the time is come, it will be easy with God to raise up some Cyrus to patronise their return.

The conversion of the heathen, and the call of the Jews, are associated together by several of the sacred writers. "In that day there shall be a root of Jesse, which shall stand for an ensign of the people : to it shall the Gentiles seek, and his rest shall be glorious. And it shall come to pass in that day, that the Lord shall set his hand again the second time to recover the remnant of his people which shall be left, from Assyria, and from Egypt, and from Pathros, and from Cush, and from Elam, and from Shinar, and from Hamath, and from the isles of the sea. And he shall set up an ensign for the nations, and shall assemble the outcasts of Israel, and gather together the dispersed of Judah from the four corners of the earth," Isa. xi. 10, 11, 12. The people being visited in their dispersion with the blessing of the gospel, shall joyfully return to their own land, and accomplish all those glorious things which are spoken of the city of God. They shall collect their vast treasures of gold, silver, and merchandise, and shall return, accompanied with artificers, to build the city and temple of the Lord, Isa. lx. 10. They

shall worship him with sacrifices, peace-offerings, and thanksgivings, as described by Ezekiel the prophet, xl. to xlviii. Some shall return by land, and floods of difficulties shall flow back to give them passage. Others shall return by sea : the ships of Tarshish shall bring God's sons from afar, and his daughters from the ends of the earth. " They shall return and come to Zion with singing, and everlasting joy shall be upon their heads : they shall obtain joy and gladness, and sorrow and sighing shall flee away," Isa. xxxv. 3. See also Isai. ii. 2, 3, 4. xxxii. xvi. 14, 15, 16.

These glorious predictions are totally inapplicable to the return of the Jews from the Babylonian captivity, because it was not connected with the conversion of the Gentiles, and they did not return from the ends of the earth. The people were not all righteous : for the most part they were extremely wicked. Their peace was not uninterrupted, and their city and temple were in no sense an eternal excellency. Indeed, they had very little peace ; and last of all, the Romans destroyed both their city and temple. All these interesting events remain as yet unaccomplished ; or else the long established rules of interpreting the prophecies must be wholly given up.

The difficulties of the work are assuredly very great, but not too great for omnipotence. Having begun a divine work in the earth, he will not leave it half finished, but carry it on to the day of Christ. The age of righteousness shall surely succeed the ages of wickedness. His work shall be revived, and his gospel propagated with a power which shall bid defiance to the sneers of infidelity, and the wide influence of hoary idolatry. " Every valley shall be exalted, every mountain and hill shall be made low ; and the crooked places shall be made straight, and the rough places plain ; and the glory of the Lord shall be revealed, and all flesh shall see it together :

for the mouth of the Lord hath spoken it," Isa. xl. 4,5. "All the ends of the world shall remember and turn unto the Lord, and all the kindred of the nations shall worship before thee. For the kingdom is the Lord's, and he is the governor in all the earth," Psalm xxii. 27, 28. The creation itself, made subject to the vanity of idols, shall be delivered from the bondage of corruption into the glorious liberty of the children of God, Rom. viii. 21. Surely those engaged in the divine work cannot want support for their faith.

But reason also, detached from revelation, affords now a brighter prospect than it afforded at any former period, that the religion of Jesus shall become the religion of the world. It is so benevolent in principle, so simple and sublime in its worship, so glorious in its expectation, and so well adapted to the present state of man, as to harmonize every moral difficulty, to captivate every candid inquirer, and to confound every system of error and idolatry. Indeed, if we except the apostate ages of the church, nothing as yet could ever resist effectively its beauty and force. It brought destruction on the Jews, by their wilful blindness; it captivated the enlightened Greeks; it softened the ferocious Romans; and converted the barbarous nations who once inhabited the north of Europe. Among the polished Chinese, it carried all before it, until the idolaters opposed its progress by the sword. Hence, from past experience, and from the success of present feeble essays, little doubt can be entertained, if a well conducted mission was established in every pagan nation, the time would fast approach when "the kingdoms of this world shall become the kingdoms of our God, and of his Christ."

X. But let us rejoice with trembling; for in that eventful day, God will awfully punish the unbelieving world. There is scarcely a text, which speaks

of the kingdom of Christ, but it either expresses, or implies, something concerning the destruction of the wicked. When he shall take the heathen for his inheritance, and the uttermost parts of the earth for his possession, he will destroy his enemies, as a potter's vessel is broken with a rod of iron, Psalm ii. "The nation that will not serve thee shall be destroyed; yea, it shall be utterly wasted away," Isa. lx. 12. "In those days shall be affliction, such as was not since the beginning of the creation which God created unto this time, neither shall be any more. Take heed to yourselves, lest at any time your heart be overcharged with surfeiting and drunkenness, and with the cares of this life, and so that day come upon you unawares. For as a snare shall it come upon all them that dwell on the face of the **WHOLE EARTH**, Watch therefore, and pray, that ye may be able to escape all those things that shall come to pass, and to stand before the Son of man," Luke xxi.

It seems apparent from several of the prophets, that the Jews, when returned, or partially returned, to their own land, shall be assailed with trouble. Their riches, commerce, and prosperity, may excite the envy and avarice of the unbelievers, and the defenceless state of the country embolden their passion for military enterprize. This will probably be the eventful moment, when "the lying spirit shall go forth out of the mouth of the dragon; and out of the mouth of the beast; and out of the mouth of the false prophet, to the kings of the earth, and of the whole world, to gather them to the battle of that great day of God Almighty," Rev. xvi. 13. 14. The ostensible plea for this allied invasion of Judea may be, (for those who engage in wars are careful to justify themselves) that the aggrandizement and prosperity of the Jewish theocracy threaten to subvert their kingdoms, and monopolize their com-

merce. Be that as it may, these hardened princes shall combine, and enter the holy land with vast multitudes of their ungodly hosts, and exceedingly alarm and terrify the Jews. "In that day there shall be a great mourning in Jerusalem, as the mourning of Hadad-rimmon, in the valley of Megiddon; and the land shall mourn, every family apart. And they shall look on him whom they have pierced," Zech. xii. Their expectations of deliverance shall be in the crucified Messiah; and by some manifestation of himself, he will come and deliver them.— "In that day shall the Lord defend the inhabitants of Jerusalem, and he that is feeble among them shall be as David. Behold, I will make Jerusalem a cup of trembling unto all the people round about, when they shall be in the siege both against Judea and against Jerusalem. All that burden themselves with it shall be cut to pieces, though all the people of the earth were gathered against it." Zech. xii. 2, 8. Ezekiel, in his views of this awful destruction of the infidel world, seems to have been more favoured than any of the ancient prophets. In the thirty-eighth and thirty-ninth chapters, we are informed at large, that the allied hosts of Gog and Magog shall assemble from Persia, Ethiopia, and the countries which surround Judea; that taking advantage of the unfortified state of the country, they shall combine to ravage it; that the Lord shall destroy them with hail and flames of fire, leaving but a sixth part to escape; and that the burying of their dead bodies shall continue seven months.

But the most sublime description of Christ's coming to destroy those who will not have him to reign over them, is found in the nineteenth chapter of the Revelation. "I saw heaven opened," says John, "and behold a white horse; and he that sat upon him was called Faithful and True, and in righteousness he doth judge and make war. And his eyes

were as a flame of fire, and on his head were many crowns ; and he had a name written that no man knew but he himself ; and he was clothed with a vesture dipped in blood ; and his name is called the Word of God. And the armies which were in heaven followed him upon white horses, clothed in fine linen, white and clean. And out of his mouth goeth a sharp sword, that with it he should smite the nations ; and he shall rule them with a rod of iron ; and he shall tread the wine-press of the fierceness and wrath of Almighty God. And he hath on his vesture, and on his thigh, a name written KING of KINGS, and LORD of LORDS. And I saw an angel standing in the sun ; and he cried with a loud voice, saying, to all the fowls that fly in the midst of heaven, come, gather yourselves together unto the supper of the great God ; that ye may eat the flesh of kings, and the flesh of captains, and the flesh of mighty men ; and the flesh of horses, and the flesh of them that sit on them, and the flesh of all men, both bond and free, both small and great. And I saw the BEAST, and the kings of the earth, gathered together to make war against him that sat on the horse, and against his army. And the beast was taken, and with him the false prophet that wrought miracles before him, with which he deceived them that had the mark of the beast, and them that worshipped his image. These both were cast alive into a lake of fire burning with brimstone.— And the remnant were slain with the sword of him that sat on the horse. And all the fowls were filled with their flesh.”

This extraordinary passage cannot refer to the day of judgment. In no sense will the fowls then feast on the wicked. It speaks unquestionably of that day in which he will come to destroy the enemies of truth and righteousness, and to establish his kingdom in all the earth. And it is highly prob-

able that it solely refers to the last efforts of Mahometanism to oppose the spiritual reign of Jesus Christ. He had described the rise of that empire, chapter the ninth, and it was proper he should also describe its destruction. Mahometanism in the east, and the pontificate in the west, have both been considered as anti-christ, and the scourge of God to the apostate church. The former seems to be denominated the false prophet, and the latter the beast. But others are of opinion, that the beast signifies the temporal powers, and the false prophet the spiritual errors of the anti-christian empire. However, the surest way for the sinner to profit by this prediction is, to fly immediately to Jesus Christ for pardon and salvation through his blood.

SECTION IX.

CONJECTURES CONCERNING THE IMPORT OF THE PROPHECIES
WHICH RESPECT THE GLORY OF THE CHURCH IN THE
LATTER DAY.

IN distinguishing the dispensations of God, the sacred writers mostly express themselves in the plural number. “The times and seasons—the times of the restitution of all things—the ages past—the last times—and, the last day.” And, as the past dispensations have exceeded one another in manifestations of truth and grace, on the same scale, we are confident he will more strikingly display, “in the ages to come, the exceeding riches of his grace in his kindness towards us through Christ Jesus.”

The succession of great and good men, who have distinguished themselves in the cause of Christianity, though they have differed widely in their opinions on this subject, yet have generally agreed, that the age of righteousness shall succeed the ages of wickedness. Barnabas affirms, that af-

ter six thousand years, the Lord will introduce the sabbatical millennium of righteousness and peace. He assures us, that the six days employed in the creation, are typical of the six thousand years of labour and sorrow which should afflict mankind ; and that the seventh day is expressive of the repose which God will grant his church in the latter day. Hermas, who is mentioned by St. Paul, intimates, that God will purify his church from all hypocrisy and vice ; and that he will unite the hearts of all men in faith and charity. But the testimony of Papias, the disciple of St. John, conferred the greatest sanction to the doctrine of the millennium, because it was supposed that he best understood the mind of his master on this subject. After these, Justin Martyr, Tertullian, Irenæus, Nepos, Origin, Victorinus, Lactantius, and Sulpicius Severus, have borne their testimony to this consolatory doctrine.

It is, however, presumed, that as these holy and venerable fathers were mistaken in some circumstances respecting the anti-christ, they are mistaken also with respect to the personal reign of Christ on earth, for a thousand years, previously to the general resurrection. This notion placed the doctrine of the millennium quite too high. It has given great offence to learned men, and induced them to explain the prophecies concerning it in a very absurd and childish manner. It is plain enough from several passages in Isaiah, that mankind will be always born in sin, and have need of regeneration ; that human life will ever be attended with labour and sorrow ; and that sin and death will not be entirely abolished during the age of righteousness. Hence, I think, we may fairly conclude, that a world in which these evils are not removed, cannot be the residence of the Lord of life and glory for a thousand years.

On this subject, further notice of the opinions of the primitive fathers, is not immediately requisite, since they very judiciously express themselves, for the most part, in the language of the sacred scriptures. In this we shall endeavour to imitate them, and class the predicted blessings under proper heads.

May the Almighty, in great condescension, grant unto us the wisdom and comfort, which these exalted and glorious predictions are calculated to inspire!

I. The happy age before us, which has been so long the cheering theme of prophesy, and the support of the church in all her struggles with the pagan and the papal beast, shall be ushered in by a personal, though transient manifestation of the Son of God. In addition to the quotations at the close of the preceding section, there are other scriptures, not less clear and explicit, in confirmation of this doctrine. "Behold," says John, "he cometh with clouds, and every eye shall see him; they also who have pierced him shall wail because of him," Rev. i. 7. This passage has an evident allusion to the twelfth chapter of Zechariah: "And they shall look on him whom they have pierced."—Hence it is the more proper to apply it to the manifestation of the Son of God at this eventful period. "Whom the heavens," says Peter, "must receive until the times of the restitution of all things, which God hath spoke by the mouth of his holy prophets, since the world began," Acts iii. 21. "Then shall the Lord go forth and fight against those [infidel] nations, as when he fought [for Joshua] in the day of battle. And his feet shall stand in that day upon the mount of Olives, which is before Jerusalem on the east, and the mount of Olives shall cleave in the midst thereof towards the east, and towards the west, and there

shall be a very great valley ; and half of the mountain shall remove toward the north, and half of it toward the south. And the Lord my God shall come, and all the saints with thee. And it shall come to pass in that day, that the light shall not be clear nor dark. But it shall be one day which shall be known to the Lord, not day nor night ; but it shall come to pass at evening time it shall be light," Zech. xiv. 3—7.

Those who apply this passage to the darkness at our Saviour's crucifixion, assume a liberty not permitted to the evangelists ; and they forget that he did not then slaughter his enemies, and rend the mountain with his feet.

II. The glorious manifestation of the Son of God shall, at the same instant, be accompanied with ten thousand prodigies and happy events, both in the kingdom of nature and of grace. The bodies of all the holy martyrs, who, during the pagan and the anti-christian persecutions, were beheaded for the witness of Jesus, and for the word of God, shall be raised up from the dead. Their useful lives were shortened on earth, and therefore God shall honour them with an earlier resurrection ; and, it seems, with an angelic ministry in his kingdom : they shall live and reign with Christ a thousand years. This is the first resurrection. " Blessed and holy is he that hath part in the first resurrection : on such the second death hath no power, but they shall be priests of God, and of Christ, and shall reign with him a thousand years," Rev. xx. 4, 5, 6. Where this reign of Christ and the holy martyrs shall be, we are not permitted to know : it is said only, " I saw thrones, and they sat upon them." It is indeed said, by the twenty-four elders, " thou hast made us unto our God kings and priests ; and we shall reign on [over] the earth," Rev. v. 10. But I think it had no peculiar reference to the millen-

nium ; it rather refers to the promise made to the apostles, Matt. xix. 28. and Luke xxii. 29, 30.—As our Lord hath said, that the children of the resurrection are equal unto the angels : and as St. Paul has distinguished their offices by the dignified appellatives of thrones—dominions—principalities—and powers, it is not improbable but the holy martyrs will be raised to an angelic ministry in the kingdom of heaven, and to superintend the church in all that glorious prosperity which they so often prayed for, and desired to see while on earth.—The Lord “will create upon every dwelling-place of Mount Zion, and upon her assemblies, a cloud and a smock by day, and the shining of a flaming fire by night : for upon all the glory shall be a defence,” Isa. iv. 5. Should this application of these prophecies be admitted, it by no means follows, that those who sit on the thrones, and the reigning martyrs, will visibly converse with mortals ; therefore, all the objections which have been made against their reigning with Christ on earth fall to the ground. This is a moderate opinion, and it was embraced by the learned Lactantius.

III. To the victory of our Lord over the infidel world, shall immediately succeed the binding and imprisonment of Satan in the bottomless pit for a thousand years. “After that he must be loosed for a little season,” Rev. xx. 3. O how glorious will be the state of the church, and flourishing the work of grace upon the soul, when the host of demons are chased away from this lower region, and their places supplied with the holy martyrs ; when we shall have every spiritual aid, and no spiritual obstruction.

IV. The manifestation of our Lord is also represented as attended with “a great and mighty earthquake,” Zech. xiv. 5. This with other changes which will then take place in the kingdom of nature,

may produce the most benignant effects on the elements, and on the fertility of the earth. "There shall be springs in the deserts, and pools in the parched ground," Isa. xxxv. The vagrant sands of Arabia shall be imprisoned; the country covered with vegetation, and its valleys replenished with rivers. The bituminous waters of the lake of Sodom shall be healed by a river from the house of God, and fishermen shall spread their nets on its banks, Ezek. xlvii. 1, 12. The barrenness of the earth, and the obstructions of husbandry, were designed to punish and restrain the wickedness of the nations; and when the wickedness shall be diminished, we have a moral certainty, that the righteous God will proportionably diminish the difficulties of agriculture. The holy scriptures put this beyond a doubt, and assure us, that the produce of the earth shall then exceed all possible calculation. So luxuriant shall be the harvest, that it shall continue to the vintage, and the vintage shall continue till the seed time. "The mountains shall drop down new wine, and the hills shall flow with milk, and the rivers of Judah shall flow with waters, and a fountain shall come out of the house of the Lord, and shall water the valley of Shittim," Joel iii. 18. "Then shall the earth yield its increase, and God, even our own God, shall bless us," Psalm lxvii. 6.

V. The increase of population shall correspond with the abundance of vegetation, and with the agriculture and industry of the husbandman. "A little one shall become a thousand and a strong one a great nation. Behold the days come, saith the Lord, that the city shall be built to the Lord, from the tower of Hananeel unto the gate of the corner; and the measuring line shall yet go forth over it upon the hill Gareb, and shall compass about to Goath. And the whole valley of the dead bodies, and of the ashes, and all the fields unto the brook

Kidron, unto the corner of the horse gate towards the east, shall be holy unto the Lord; it shall not be plucked up or thrown down, any more forever," Jer. xxxi. 38, 40. All the waste and desolate places shall be inhabited; the increase of population shall be such as to require emigration; for the land shall be too narrow. The children of succeeding generations shall say to their fathers, "the place is too straight for me; give place that I may dwell," Isa. xlix. 20. So numerous and great are the blessings which shall descend on this lower world, at the times of the restitution of all things, as may, in a qualified sense, be termed a new creation. "Behold I create new heavens and a new earth: I create Jerusalem a rejoicing, and her people a joy. And I will rejoice in Jerusalem and joy in my people: and the voice of weeping shall no more be heard in her, nor the voice of crying. There shall no more be thence an infant of days, nor an old man that hath not filled his days; for the child shall die an hundred years old; but the sinner being an hundred years old shall be accursed. And they shall build houses, and inhabit them; and they shall plant vineyards, and eat of the fruit of them. They shall not build, and another inhabit; they shall not plant, and another eat; for, as the days of a tree are the days of my people, and mine elect shall long enjoy the work of their hands. The inhabitants shall not say—I am sick; for the people shall be forgiven their iniquities," Isa. lxv. 17, &c. From this view of the latter day's glory we learn, that mankind will be then much exempt from disease, and die in a very old age; that there will be few wicked men; and that this new earth must be different from that mentioned by Peter and John, because death will be here, and some instances of wickedness.

VI. In that happy age, the peace of society and the intercourse of commerce will not be interrupted by the sound of the trumpet, or the roaring of cannon; for God shall make wars to cease to the end of the earth, Psalm xlv. 9. "Nation shall not lift up sword against nation, neither shall they learn war any more." In that populous state of the world, the wild beasts, of course, will be few and all domesticated. "The wolf shall lie down with the lamb, and the leopard shall lie down with the kid, and the calf, and the young lion, and the fatling together; and the little child shall lead them. And the cow and the bear shall feed: and their young ones shall lie down together; and the lion shall eat straw like the ox. They shall not hurt nor destroy in all my holy mountain," Isa. xi. 5, 6, 7, 9. And if the Lord can so diminish the ferocity of wild beasts, he is able to change the most peevish and implacable heart into meekness and love. If Jesus speak the word, the lion shall become a lamb.

VII. Great and inestimable are the blessings already enumerated; but they are very inconsiderable, if compared with the graces and talents which God shall communicate to the saints, and with the unction of the Spirit which shall rest on all religious assemblies. The pentecost will then extend to all the earth, and every nation exhibit primitive Christianity arrived at a vigorous maturity. The superabundance of knowledge, graces, and gifts, will, in some sort, constitute the whole church a royal priesthood unto God. They shall all be righteous: and they shall no more teach every man his neighbour, and every man his brother, saying—know the Lord; for they shall all know him from the least to the greatest—The earth shall be full of the knowledge of the Lord as waters cover the sea.

The public worship of that age will have a striking resemblance of heaven, and the immense con-

gregations be overshadowed with the divine presence. All hardness and obduracy shall be removed from the mind; all iniquity forgiven; and the laws of Christ written on every heart. When they pray, the Lord will answer, and when they call, he will say—here am I. The people shall shout and sing the praises of their God, and the Lord shall rain down righteousness upon them. His glory shall enter his holy temple in Judca, by the east gate, and dwell on the mercy-seat. He will make the place of his feet glorious in the midst of them, and he will beautify the house of his glory. His altars shall no more be attended, nor his sanctuary filled with priests and ministers who dishonour his name: but he will give the people pastors after his own heart, who shall feed them with knowledge and understanding, Isa. xii. lx. Ezck. xliii. Jer. iii. 15.

Kings, princes, and the most illustrious characters, shall esteem it their highest honour to be the messengers of the churches, to bring gifts and offerings to the house of God, and to worship before him. Nor shall one nation be jealous of another; “for the Lord shall be king in all the earth. His dominion shall be from sea to sea, and from the river to the ends of the earth. The kingdom, and dominion, and greatness of the kingdom under the whole heaven, shall be given to the people of the Most High; whose kingdom is an everlasting kingdom, and all dominions shall serve and obey him. The zeal of the Lord of Hosts will perform this,” Psal. xxii. Dan. vii. Isa. ix. 6.

*Rise, crown'd with grace, imperial Salem, Rise!
Exalt thy tow'ry head, and lift thine eyes;
See a long race thy spacious courts adorn,
See future sons and daughters yet unborn!
See barb'rous nations at thy gates attend,
Walk in thy light, and in thy temple bend;*

See thy bright altars throng'd with prostrate kings,
 And heap'd with products of Sabæan springs!
 For thee Idume's spicy forests blow,
 And seeds of gold in Ophir's mountains glow.
 See heav'n its sparkling portals wide display,
 And break upon thee in a flood of day!
The light himself shall shine
 Reveal'd, and God's eternal day be thine.

POPE.

What a glorious and desirable state of things is here before us!!! A world—full of people, and full of plenty. No demons in the air to enflame the passions, foment insidious factions, and kindle war among the nations. Virtue and truth reigning in society; and health, peace, and joy, blooming on every countenance. But they must have their day of probation. God hath largely diversified his dispensations towards mankind, but never interrupted our moral liberty, or accepted any services of man which were not voluntary. Accordingly, at the expiration of the thousand years, Satan shall be loosed out of prison, and shall go out to deceive the nations, &c. Rev. xx. 7—10.

An awful obscurity veils these events, which are so distant and indistinct; and at present it seems too daring to comment on the loosing of Satan, further than to say, that the piety of that happy age shall thereby be put to the test. However, it is conjectured, that he will not presume, at first, to seduce them into gross wickedness. But, finding them dwelling under a benignant sky, and on a soil which might vie with paradise, he will endeavour to ensnare them by the luxuries of their table, which must speedily produce effeminacy, idleness and want; and want may induce them to extort supplies from those who have plenty. From depredation and plunder, they may easily measure back their steps into the follies and vices of the apostate ages. At least, it is apprehended this may be the case with great numbers in different parts of the earth. This

conjecture seems the more probable, because this happy age will not be wholly free from wickedness; and by consequence, not free from lukewarmness in religion. How needful, even then, for every one to watch, and to see that his soul be truly alive to God, lest he fall on the day of trial. These apostates having caused severe afflictions to the church in many places, may at length be hardened to rebel against the Lord, and against the beloved city, which will be stored with riches and plenty, and be led on by the devil to their own destruction, as the first army of Gog and Magog were led on by the lying spirits.

Whether this notion of the apostacy be proper or improper, or whatever success Satan may have among the nations, we are assured, by many promises, that he will have little success against the church in Judea. "As I have sworn that the waters of Noah should no more go over the earth; so have I sworn that I will not be wroth with thee, nor rebuke thee. For the mountains shall depart, and the hills be removed; but my kindness shall not depart from thee, neither shall the covenant of my peace be removed, saith the Lord, that hath mercy on thee. Thy sun shall no more go down, neither shall thy moon wane; for the Lord shall be thine everlasting light, and the days of thy mourning shall be ended," Isa. liv. 9, 10. lx. 20.

Short, indeed, will be this last struggle of the common enemy; for the Lord Jesus shall be revealed from heaven in flaming fire, to surprise and punish the apostate multitudes. "As it was in the days of Noah, so shall the coming of the Son of man be. They were eating and drinking, marrying and giving in marriage, and the flood came and destroyed them all," Luke xvii. 27. "I saw," says John, "a great white throne, and him that sat on it, from whose face the earth and the heavens fled

away, and there was found no place for them.— And I saw the dead, small and great, stand before God; and the books were opened; and another book was opened, which is the book of life; and the dead were judged out of those things which were written in the books, according to their works.— And death and hell were cast into the lake of fire. 'This is the second death. And whosoever was not found written in the book of life, was cast into the lake of fire,' Rev. xx. 11—15

What a train of solemnities is here! The dissolution of heaven and earth. A world of spirits receiving their bodies a second time from the dust: and as the shepherds used to clear the forests, and separate the sheep from the goats, so are the wicked for ever separated from the good. How glorious and how qualified is the judge! He searcheth all hearts, and there is no secret but is manifest to the eyes of him with whom we have to do! The books are opened, and correspond with the copy in every man's bosom: as a person walking over soft ground, leaves the print of his steps behind, so are all the motions of our hearts recorded here.— Every man is judged according to his works, his talents, and his dispensation. The heathen is judged according to the law of nature; the Jew according to the law of Moses; and the Christian according to the gospel. In righteousness God shall judge the world.

And oh! how will the wicked bear to see him, whom they have rejected and blasphemed, now exalted to ineffable glory and dominion? His members, whom they have persecuted and contemned, now seated on thrones? How will they bear to see the incomparable love of Christ, now turned into high disdain; his long-suffering and meekness changed into fury and revenge; to hear that voice which so often pronounced blessings, and said,

“come;” now say, “depart ye cursed into everlasting fire, prepared for the devil and his angels”? They have despised his mercy, and must revere his justice; they have hated the light, and darkness is their dwelling: they have rejected eternal happiness, and everlasting misery is their portion. What! separated from God—from all good, and hope for ever lost!!! Oh! how insupportable the thought! Let the sinner timely hearken to Moses and the prophets, to Christ and the apostles, that he come not into that place of torment.

The scene shall close by the accession of the righteous to the new and everlasting kingdom of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. Their bodies shall be inconceivably beautiful, perfect, and luminous, like the glorified humanity of Christ. Their capacity of happiness shall be matured and enlarged; the many powers and affections of the soul which are now obscured in ignorance and infirmity shall then be unfolded, and gratified with consummate happiness. The soul shall be ennobled with a proper degree of intuitive knowledge, immutably fixed in the love of God, and no more assailed with temptation, or afflicted with evil. Consequently, the mediatorial kingdom shall cease, and be delivered up to God, even the Father. Then shall we see—(and O that God may count us worthy to see!) the Lord Jesus, who is above every name that is named, at the head of his church, which is his body, and the fulness of him that filleth all in all. Rivers of knowledge, and pleasure, and happiness, and life, shall flow from his throne, and deluge the kingdom with the fulness of eternal joy. In the administration of his eternal providence, he shall continue to disclose the amazing wonders of his love, which shall charm the happy worlds before the throne, and inspire them with boundless variety of happiness, ever new and increasing indelight. But here,

like infant princes, who are unacquainted with the dignity of their birth, we are unable to anticipate the felicity of that better world. It hath not entered the heart of man, the things that God hath prepared for them that love him. May the Almighty assist us to apprehend them more strongly by faith, and by a larger enjoyment of them in our hearts ; that we may rejoice in hope, and trample on the vanities of this world, for the glory that fadeth not away.

We shall close our views of the scripture prophecies with a caution, not to indulge ourselves in rash and fruitless inquiries concerning the time of Christ's approach. We are ever ready to ask, with the disciples, when these things shall be, and what signs there shall be when these things come to pass. The signs of his coming to destroy the wicked city, he condescended to give, that they might improve them for their own safety ; but concerning the time he deemed it sufficient to say, " this generation shall not pass away until all these things be fulfilled." And when they asked, on another occasion, whether he would, at that time, restore the kingdom unto Israel ; he told them plainly, that the times and seasons for the restoration of the kingdom were concealed in the counsel of the Father ; that, previously to the introduction of that happy age, the gospel must be preached to the Jews at home, and the heathen in the uttermost parts of the earth. Hence we may be fully assured, that the time of our Saviour's coming to restore righteousness to a sinful world, cannot be discovered by the most accurate calculations of the prophetic numbers. Such a disclosure would too much take off our attention from present duties, and discompose the whole system of moral freedom, with regard both to believers and unbelievers. The signs of his coming are all that heaven has thought proper to reveal ; and they are quite sufficient to raise the hopes, and excite the activity of the church.

We are indeed told, that the anti-christian empire should continue a thousand two hundred and sixty years ; but we are not told in what year this empire commenced. It is said, by Daniel, that the abomination which maketh desolate should continue in the holy place a thousand two hundred and ninety years. He then adds, “ blessed is he that waiteth, and cometh to the thousand three hundred and thirty-five days,” or prophetic years ; xii. 11, 12. It has been conjectured, that the first of these numbers allows thirty years after the fall of anti-christ for the entire cleansing of the sanctuary ; and that the second allows a period of seventy-five years for the universal spread of the gospel. Hence it is our best wisdom to profit by what we do know, till it shall please the Lord further to develope his mysterious counsel. Let us not, while we ask when the kingdom of God shall come, neglect, like the scribes and pharisees, to look for it in our own hearts. If it be not there, in vain should we be permitted to see it in the earth. Except we be converted, and become as little children, we shall in nowise enter the kingdom of heaven. What joy could we have at his approach, unless he were *our* Lord, and unless we were *his* servants. Let it therefore be our constant prayer, that he would enter our hearts in the regenerating power of his Holy Spirit, and create us anew in righteousness and true holiness. Let us, by patient continuing in well doing, seek for honor, glory, immortality, and eternal life.

SECTION X.

INTERNAL EVIDENCES OF THE TRUTH AND REASONABLENESS OF THE CHRISTIAN RELIGION; OR, A DEMONSTRATION THAT IT IS AS WORTHY OF THE WISDOM, POWER, AND GOODNESS OF GOD, AS THE WORKS OF CREATION AND PROVIDENCE.

“The glorious gospel of the blessed God.” PAUL.

BEFORE entering on this subject, which is confined to the province of reason, it would be happy if every one could ascertain, so far as to satisfy his own mind, the nature and degrees of evidence, which man in his dark and depraved state ought to expect of the truth of revealed religion. If the evidences of future glory were more strong to good men, the ravishment of hope would induce them to disregard the duties of life; and if the evidences of the truth of christianity were more strong to bad men, their moral liberty would be destroyed, and faith would no longer purify the heart. But if these evidences rise to such a mediocrity as to render men virtuous by receiving, or vicious by rejecting them, in my opinion, they highly accord with the moral government of God, and are such as we ought to expect. It is apparently for this reason, that the Deity conceals himself in his works of creation and providence, that mankind may become wise and virtuous by constant endeavours to trace his perfections.

The grandeur of God in the creation, and the harmony of the universe, have ever commanded the admiration of mankind. The variety of herbs and trees, flowers and fruits; the degrees of heat and cold, moisture and drought; the proportion of night and day to the labour and rest of men; and the length of summer to the growth and maturity of fruits, demonstrate that God has given a perfect finish to all his works; nor can the wisdom and experience of ages prove how any creature could have been better made, or more happily arranged. Hence

it is inferred, that if Christianity be also of God, there ought to be a harmony and propriety in all its parts, which correspond with the works of creation and providence, and do equal honour to his wisdom, power, and goodness. According to these received and equitable principles, let us, with undisguised sincerity and proper diffidence, presume to examine the Christian faith; and I hope it will fully appear, that God has done what was best and fittest to be done for the restoration of his once noble, but now apostate, offspring.

I. In the first instance, there can be no absurdity in supposing that God, who hath permitted the fall, might also permit the recovery of man, or restore him by some means to the divine favour.—This, we may presume, he has done from a survey of his kindness to the sinful world. Vile and ungrateful as we are, he indulgently supplies our wants, and heals our diseases; and shall he not heal the immortal spirit, which is by far the most excellent part of all his works? Shall he not have compassion on the wounded conscience, and give hope and glory to the desponding mind?

II. It will be also admitted, that the Creator only could restore his degenerate creatures, and repair the ruins of our nature. Man is altogether incapable of renewing his soul in the divine image, and of regaining his forfeited paradise; feeble and ineffectual would all his endeavours be to emancipate himself from the fetters of sin and death, if unassisted by the power of God. And to expect restoration by a system of pure mercy, would obscure the divine justice, and be a daring presumption against the equity of providence, which so awfully punishes the wicked. A system of pure mercy, in the present state of things, would have been extremely ruinous to the morality of human nature; and how far it might have affected angels, we are incapable of judging, Eph. iii. 10.

III. We may therefore bring forward the grand question, and ask, what happier method could have been adopted to redeem and save mankind, than for one of the human race to be replenished with the fulness of the godhead; to be sanctified from his mother's bosom; to die meritoriously; and to take our humanity in triumph to heaven? Being innocent in his person, and divine in his nature, his death must be vicarious, and his merits of infinite worth. And could any method of recovery more strikingly display the equity of God, than for the nature which sinned to suffer? Or could his love of justice be more strongly made manifest than by the gift and punishment of his beloved Son? Are not these merits every way commensurable to the expiation of guilt; and is it not every way compatible with the divine government to accept of these as our propitiation? Let this inquiry be exemplified.—Have we deserved the frowns of Almighty God? the Son hath trodden the wine-vat of the fierceness of his wrath. Have we made ourselves liable to the curse of the law? he was made a little lower than the angels, and tasted death for every man.—Have we lost our innocence and rectitude? he was made a sin-offering for us, who knew no sin, that we might be made the righteousness of God in him. I proceed: the Creator having permitted our fall and ruin to take place in the first Adam, does it not vindicate his justice from the imputation of severity, that he hath permitted our recovery by Jesus Christ, the second Adam? If our original depravity was without our fault, our redemption was without our help. If we derive a corrupt and depraved nature from our parents, we may obtain a divine nature by Jesus Christ. If the fall was attended with the loss of paradise, the recovery invests us with the kingdom of heaven, and with innumerable blessings which did not belong to a state of in-

nocence. "Not as the transgression so is the free gift. Where sin hath abounded grace hath much more abounded." We are now initiated into the mysteries of the glorious person and grace of God the Redeemer. Man has here no cause of complaint against his Maker, but he is laid under the highest obligations of gratitude and love.

IV. In all disputes and differences which arise between nations or individuals, it is safest to refer them to a wise and virtuous arbitration. The having recourse to arms, or law, is a very unhappy way of terminating misunderstandings. On this principle, nothing can be objected against the mediatorial scheme by Jesus Christ. He is perfectly qualified for the office, being God and Man in his glorious person; and consequently, equally concerned for the divine honour, and the happiness of human nature. In him our affairs are in the hands of a friend, a brother, and a covenant God. And would we wish to take them out of his hands, and manage them ourselves, or transfer them to some Socinian Saviour?

V. Does any scheme of happiness, ever presented to the world, afford such comfort and hope as a view of the perfection and glory to which the human nature is elevated in the person of Jesus Christ? He was once encompassed with our infirmities, and with the sorrows of death; but now is exalted to ineffable glory, and invested with immortality and life. I say, in his glorious person; for in the resurrection and ascension of our blessed Lord, we have more than visionary schemes of happiness. All is substance and reality. "Handle me," said he, "for a spirit hath not flesh and bones as ye see me have." He showed himself alive after his passion for the space of forty days, talked with his disciples at large concerning his kingdom, and permitted them to witness his ascension into heaven.

VI. The entrance of the Son of God into this lower world was not without a happy arrangement and preparation for his coming. A succession of prophecies and promises had illuminated the ancient dispensations with increasing lustre ; and had so delineated his character as must have distinguished him from the sons of men, and insured the detection of all impostors. His offices and sufferings had been adumbrated by a grand assemblage of rituals, and the unfading glory of the gospel church reflected back by the transient splendour of the Jewish temple. He came to enlighten the nations, and assumed the office of a supreme teacher. He came to be a pattern of all rectitude and virtue, and placed himself on a level with mankind. He was subject to pain, poverty, sorrow, and death. He did not choose a savage and untutored age for his advent, but an age when government, commerce, and science had civilized the nations, and rendered them more capable of embracing the gospel revelation. He did not reside in some solitary island, or remote part of the world, but in Judea, the centre of the nations. And the Jews being the only people who had retained the pure knowledge and worship of God, and the promises of the Messiah, which all other nations had nearly lost, it was highly proper he should appear among them, and confirm the covenants made to their fathers. We may also add, that his death being the greatest event that could occur in the history of mankind, it was not proper that it should have taken place in the first age of the world ; for then but one family could have attested the tragic scene, and the evidence would have been too much obscured by remote antiquity : nor was it proper to have been delayed till near the end of the world, lest despondency should have deprived us of our hope. The happy accordance of all these,

and other occurrences, demonstrate an arrangement of our redemption which is worthy of the ruler of the universe, and ought to command the veneration of mankind. The harmony in the kingdom of grace, in every respect, coincides with the harmony of creation and providence.

VII. We shall next take a view of the fulness of the gospel for completing the great work of regeneration, and making the soul a habitation of God through the Spirit. Have we all strayed from the fold of innocence? the good shepherd is come to seek and save that which is lost. Are we surrounded with the shades of darkness and death? the light of life breaks in upon the mind, and discovers the paths of righteousness and peace. Are we defiled with our numerous iniquities? here is the fountain open for sin and for uncleanness. Do we find ourselves weak when exposed to temptations? we are directed to weaken our corruptions by reasonable self-denial, and aided to vanquish them by the grace of the Holy Spirit. Is there a strong aversion in our hearts to the ways of holiness or duties of religion? the Lord overpowers our enmity with such a cloud of mercies and favours, that we can no longer resist the charms of his grace. Is there danger lest the heart should be lifted up with the communications of God's love? he rectifies our comforts with crosses, and our talents with infirmities. In making sacrifices for religion and in suffering present evils, do we need the support of a future retribution? "rejoice," says the Lord, "and be exceeding glad, for great is your reward in heaven." Labouring under the complicated burdens of pain, sorrow, sickness, and death, what refuge can be so suitable as an approach to the wounded-side of our incarnate God? He has himself borne our sicknesses, and knows how to give comfort and hope to his dying saints.

Being depressed with increasing infirmities, and daily more weary of the insupportable wickedness of the age; and having by long habits of piety, become matured in grace, and filled with the love of heaven; what can be more reasonable, than for God to indulge his servants with a translation to a better world; that the soul, returning back to God, may shake off the cumbrous body, and find the fulness of felicity in his bosom? Surely, then, the plenitude of the gospel corresponds with the munificence of nature; and these gifts of mercy and love are worthy of the Creator's bounty.

VIII. The radiance of the gospel having made a proper distinction between truth and error, vice and virtue, what happier method could have been adopted for the preservation of piety, than to associate the righteous in Christian fellowship? Whoever repented of his sins, and believed in the godhead of Christ, (Acts viii. 37.) was admitted to baptism; and being baptized with the Holy Ghost, he was instructed to consider himself as one with the great body of saints, both in heaven and earth. This was the badge of distinction between the world and the church. Nothing, I think, can be more beautiful, than the views which the scripture gives us of the endearing fellowship and love which subsists in the church of God. In affinity, they are all of the household of faith, and of the family of heaven: they have one father, even God, and are all brethren in Christ Jesus. If the dwelling of the Lord with his people be spoken of, they are called his temple, having Christ for their foundation and glory. Every Christian is a living stone in that mansion, or a habitation of God through the Spirit. If the assistance they afford one to another be considered, they are denominated the body of Christ, and members one of another. When the scriptures speak of their fruitfulness and graces, they are said

to be branches of Christ, the true vine, and to glorify God by bringing forth much fruit. How amiable are thy tabernacles, O Lord of hosts! How blessed are these thy servants, who sit at thy feet and hear thy wisdom! How happy is that society which knows no distinctions but those that are divine! He chooses wisely who says, this people shall be my people, and their God shall be my God.

IX. Yet our views of this society must be very incomplete, till the laws by which it is governed are considered. We are commanded to make God our supreme happiness; to love him with all our heart, and mind, and strength; to submit cheerfully to his will, for he chooses always what is best for his creatures; to supplicate his mercy and forgiveness; and to offer him the unceasing sacrifices of adoration, prayer, and thanksgiving. In regard to ourselves, we are enjoined to preserve our bodies in temperance, chastity, sanctification and honour; to watch the motions of our hearts, lest we are ensnared with vice; to repress all selfish and inordinate passions; to take up our daily cross; to sustain the salutary afflictions of life with the hope of future glory; and to place our whole dependence on the never-failing providence of God, who will crown our industry with plenty. In society, we are commanded to love our neighbours as ourselves; to do to others as we would that they should do to us; to practice justice, mercy, and truth; to live as little children, artless and free from guile; to be unsuspicious in our temper, and fervent in charity; to shun the appearance of evil; to refrain from doing injuries; and to forgive one another; to be meek, patient, gentle, and easy to be entreated; not rendering evil for evil, but overcoming evil with good; and to be perfect in all these virtues, as our Father which is in heaven is perfect.

Now, where is the system of superstition, of philosophy, or of daring infidelity, that ever presented the world with a system of morals like this? Detached precepts, are, indeed, found in their writings, similar to those of the gospel; but no regular system can be collected from their works. The philosophers, who really did believe in a future state, were so bewildered with the vanity of human passions, and with the mixture of good and evil in the world, that they were unable, without the aid of revelation, to draw the proper line of morality. And the priests were regardless what sort of lives the people led: it was enough if they were votaries to the prevailing superstition, and brought their offerings to the temple. We, therefore, appeal to the bar of enlightened reason and hoary experience; and ask, whether the morality of the gospel be not admirably calculated to remedy the evils which afflict society? whether any antidote can operate so efficaciously in calming vindictive passions, as meekness, forbearance, and kindness? Esau was pacified and softened by the presents and submission of his brother. It was a just submission for his treachery, and an effect of sincere piety, having conversed the preceding night with God. Saul also, when he found that David had taken his spear, and spared his life, exclaimed, "Thou art more righteous than I." And "why should we not prefer," says Neckar, "religious principles, which prevent crimes, to the rigors of law, which punish them." What is so likely to induce masters to be humane and equitable, as a belief that one is their master who is in heaven? What can so efficaciously induce men to be holy, as a conviction of the omnipresence of God; or deter them from secret wickedness, as a persuasion that God shall judge the secrets of men by Jesus Christ?

We may have a more comprehensive view of the excellency of Christianity, by asking, what the effects would be, supposing a whole nation were to embrace the doctrines, and imitate the piety, of Jesus Christ? Guilt, fear, and shame would soon be chased away from its coasts. The civil power would scarcely need the aid of penal statutes; for the love of rectitude and order would pervade all ranks of society; and the admonitions of the aged would be sufficient to repress the indiscretions of youth. Property would all be secure without the precautions of locks and bars; for habits of temperance and industry would raise the people above the temptations of poverty, and the meanness of fraud. The poor, whom age or infirmities had rendered incapable of labour, would then be supported, not as *paupers*, but as brethren or fathers in the Lord. The love of God and the love of man would inspire every bosom, and songs of praise would dwell on every tongue.

I am happy in having it in my power to say, that I have witnessed these effects of Christianity in a considerable number of families within the circle of my religious acquaintance. Their cheerful piety, their heavenly conversation, their amiable tempers and obliging simplicity of manners, have been, to me, as the fragrance of herbs amid the heat of summer. I have approached the chambers of expiring saints, and seen their countenances sparkle with immortal hope. I have seen them look with scorn on the pageantry and vanity of this world, and put their feet on the neck of the king of terrors. They have exulted in receiving the baptism of their crucified Lord, and their fault-ering accents have so expatiated on his dying love, and on the glory of heaven, as to make me envious of their situation. Here is realized all that history has said of the constancy and courage of

the holy martyrs. Surely then, that religion must be from God, which endows us with these divine supports, in the extremities of nature, and brings so large a portion of heaven into the human breast.

The Christian system is far too perfect to be of human invention. The grandeur and sublimity of its doctrines, its internal plenitude and purity, its rewards and punishments, and the consummate harmony of all its parts, give it a finish, which happily corresponds with the works of creation and providence. If this system be compared with literary productions, with codes of civil law, with epic poems, or with the most approved moral systems, it exceeds them as much as the works of nature exceed the works of art. And can it be supposed, that Peter and his brethren framed a system, which infinitely exceeds them all? Had they fabricated the gospel, they would, at least, have imitated the philosophers and poets, in taking some part of the honour to themselves. But with one voice they all affirm, that they received these things of the Lord Jesus. "We are not sufficient of ourselves to reason out or collect any of them: our sufficiency is of God."

I therefore conclude, that a religion which gives us the sublimest ideas of the divine perfections, offers him the purest worship, and discovers an honourable way of suffering sinners to approach him: a religion which regulates all our passions, presents us with a suitable scheme of regeneration, discloses a ravishing prospect of a future state, and elevates the human nature to all possible happiness and glory in heaven, is every way worthy of the author of nature, and the ruler of the universe.

SECTION XI.

A GENERAL VIEW OF THE INTERNAL AND EXTERNAL EVIDENCES OF THE INSPIRATION OF MOSES, THE PROPHETS, AND THE APOSTLES; AND OF THE TRUTH OF CHRISTIANITY.

“Nihil magnum sine afflatu divino.”

“Nothing is great without the divine inspiration.”

I. By inspiration is meant, a revelation of the good pleasure of God, which could not have been discovered by the light of nature.

1. This was frequently made to the patriarchs by a personal appearance of the Messiah. Sometimes he appeared in a fiery cloud, and sometimes he veiled his glory in the human form. In this way, Moses was favoured with the greater part of his revelations respecting the Jews. He presented himself before the cloudy pillar, and received the living oracles immediately from God.

2. To Abimelech, Pharaoh, Solomon and others, the Lord spake in dreams. The dreams were natural, but the agency was divine. It seemed natural for Pharaoh to dream of seven thin ears of corn, and of seven full ears; but the seven years of plenty, and the seven years of famine which followed, demonstrated both the dream and the interpretation to be of God. This, among innumerable occurrences, illustrates the doctrine of a particular providence. Because the universe is governed by an established order, and the seasons follow one another without interruption, impious men have presumed, either that there is no God, or that

“The universal cause,
“Acts not by partial but by general laws.”

So it may seem to those who have never considered providence in a moral view. But in the year 1799 and 1800, he afflicted this country with short har-

vests, and gave our German neighbours, in the same parallel of latitude, very abundant crops !

3. The third and the most frequent way of receiving the divine communications was by vision ; that is, by a supernatural representation of an object to the mind while the person was awake. This seems the only circumstance in which it differed from revelation made by dreams.

4. Divine communications were sometimes made to holy men, by what is termed plenary inspiration. They were suddenly filled with the divine impetus, and broke forth in extemporaneous effusions of discourse or song, as the Spirit gave them utterance.

5. Revelation was frequently accompanied by miracles. These were sometimes performed to confirm a young prophet in the belief of his mission. The Lord gave Moses in his rod a double sign concerning his mission to Pharaoh ; and Gideon required a double sign concerning his call to emancipate his country. Miracles were also performed to establish the truth of unaccomplished predictions, and to convert the people to the true religion. When the man of God cried against the altar of Bethel, and announced to Jeroboam and his priests, that their idol should prove their destruction, and that a child should be born who would burn men's bones upon it, he gave them a sign, by rending the altar, and scattering the ashes, 1 Kings xiii.

6. The inspiration of holy men was limited to the object in view. Heaven was not profuse of its choicest favours, and the prophets would have laid down their lives sooner than have added conjecture to revelation. Isaac was instructed to bless his son, but he knew not that he was blessing Jacob instead of Esau. Moses did not know the object of the tribes who wished for an inheritance on the eastern banks of the Jordan. Samuel did not know the voice of God till he had called the third time ;

and when sent to anoint the son of Jesse king over Israel, he did not know the youth till the Spirit had pointed him out. And Elisha, another of the great prophets, frankly confessed his ignorance of the Shunamite's sorrow when she prostrated at his feet. The apostles, in like manner, though filled with the Holy Ghost, did not know that the Gentiles were to be received into the church until first proselyted to Judaism.

7. With regard to the style and composition of the sacred writings, though the Holy Spirit dictated the language, he nevertheless condescended to human weakness, by allowing the inspired person to express himself in his usual manner. Isaiah was a man of distinction and literature, which accounts for the purity and elegance of his style.—Amos was a herdsman: hence his language is plain, and his similes correspond with his occupation and simplicity; but his unction is worthy of his cause.

8. Some good men have thought, without sufficient examination, that the historical books of the Old Testament were written with less inspiration than the prophetic writings. But if it be considered, that these books exhibit a grand scheme of providence concerning the sins and punishment of the wicked, the sufferings and preservation of the righteous; that they are replete with important predictions; that they are often cited in the New Testament, as divine books; we must regard them as composed under the peculiar influences of the Holy Spirit. "All scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, and instruction in righteousness."

II. The inspiration of Moses as a prophet, and his credibility as a historian, are sufficiently confirmed by evidence from his works.

1. The account he has given us of the creation is perfectly philosophical, and amazingly sublime.— But the fragments we have concerning it in the writings of the Egyptians, the Chaldees, and the Chinese, are extremely absurd, and they terminate in fable and confusion. Hence there is no absurdity in presuming, that he derived his knowledge from a purer source.

2. Moses lived in an age of the grossest ignorance and superstition, in which divine homage was paid to beasts and herbs ; and he has given us an idea of the being and perfections of God, which has never been improved. Whence then, if not divinely inspired, could he so far excel all the writers who lived near his age, and arrive all at once to a perfect knowledge of theology ?

3. Moses has also written an account of the origin of evil ; the destruction of the world by the deluge ; the confusion of languages at Babel ; and the genealogy of the families who populated the earth.— These are historic occurrences of the greatest notoriety ; and they could not have been unknown to the ancient writers among the heathen. But these writers, according to the usage of their age, have involved the whole of tradition in fable. The theogony of Homer is intolerably faulty in this respect. The pagan priests, to induce the people to pay divine honours to the deceased patriarchs, feigned them all to be descended from the superior gods by monstrous amours, conceptions, and births. But the disguise may be removed by reading Adam for Saturn, Eve for Pandora, Eden for the garden of Jupiter, Noah for Ogyges or Deucalion, Lot and his wife, who fled from Sodom, for Orpheus and Eurydice, Abraham and Sarah, who dwelt under the oak at Mamre, for Philemon and Baucis. Most of these elucidations of pagan fable have been successfully urged by the primitive fathers in their books

against the Gentiles, in favour of the Mosaic history. The names of cities and nations mentioned by Moses, have also been occasionally identified by several of the ancients; and latterly the learned Bochart has rendered essential service to religion, by exhibiting them in a general view. The credibility of Moses, concerning the origin of nations from the patriarch Noah, is further confirmed by their similarity in important customs. It is observed by Homer, that they all respect the seventh day; and by Aristotle, that both the polished and barbarous nations number by *tens*. And no man will deny, that all nations, however they differ in colour, or in smaller customs, have offered sacrifices to the deity, and honoured the memory of the dead.

4. If Moses were not divinely inspired, it appears from his writings that he was extremely defective in judgment; and of this he has never been accused. He prohibited the Jews from ploughing and sowing their land the seventh year, and from reaping that which grew of itself. He promised, contrary to the course of nature, that the sixth year should produce a double quantity of grain. God seems to have intended this sabbatical year to be a figure of the peace and abundance which he will give the church in the latter day. The Jews were really a nation of wonders. But, if this law had not been confirmed by providence, it would have ruined the whole Mosaic system. The *wits* would have made very free with Moses as a prophet; they would have said, that however great he might have been as a statesman, he certainly was not maturely skilled in agriculture. This law was observed in Israel till the ten tribes revolted from the house of David, and elected Jeroboam for their king. From the time of this revolt and apostacy to the Babylonian captivity, was four hundred and ninety years, which included seventy sabbatical years. Then

the Lord awfully removed the ten tribes, that the land might enjoy her sabbaths. The captivity of Judah and Benjamin was not more than fifty-six years. Let this be a warning to the Christian world to keep holy the sabbath-day ; for God has guarded its sanctity by his judgments.

5. The disinterestedness of Moses is a strong presumption that he was a man of perfect integrity, and actuated by the divine injunctions. He had seen the whole nation frequently revolt, and once apostatize to gross idolatry ; yet, when giving laws concerning the division of the land, he gave his own tribe no portion but the tenths. Must he not have foreseen, that if this inconstant people should once more change their religion, his brethren would all be ruined ? In the appointment of a successor, likewise, his own children and relatives were overlooked, and Joshua was nominated from another tribe. The man must be insensible of the sentiments of a father who does not feel the force of this argument, and revere the legislator of Israel.

III. In like manner, the character of the holy prophets is perfectly agreeable to the exalted notions we might reasonably form of ministers inspired of heaven. Their call was extraordinary, their piety deep, and unshaken by calamities ; their persecutions were various, and often extended to martyrdom ; and their lives were wholly devoted to the exercise of their divine mission. The simplicity and majesty of their style ; the strength and decision of their arguments ; their contempt of danger, and courage in reproving kings, give us a sublime character of God speaking to the nations by the ministry of his anointed servants. Well might the Jews, after seeing the honour which providence had conferred upon them by the accomplishment of their predictions, rebuild and ornament their sepulchres, though their fathers had killed them. Well might

they preserve and reverence their divine writings, and count the words, and syllables, and letters in each book, to prevent, in transcription, either fraud or error.

IV. Concerning the plenary inspiration of the holy apostles no doubt can be entertained by those who revere the scriptures. The Lord promised that the Comforter should teach them all things, and guide them into all the truth, which concerned either their salvation, their ministry, or the government of the churches. Hence, when writing concerning the liberty of the Gentile converts with regard to Jewish customs, they said "it seemeth good to us, and to the *Holy Ghost*." St. Paul affirms expressly, that the gospel he preached was not after man, nor by man; neither was he taught it but by the revelation of Jesus Christ. In another place, when extolling the Christian above the Grecian philosophy, he says, "eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither have entered the heart of man, the things which God hath prepared for them that love him.—But God hath revealed them to us by his Spirit; for the Spirit searcheth all things, yea, the deep things of God. Which things also we speak, not in the words which man's wisdom teacheth, but which the Holy Ghost teacheth."

Conformably to this, he required the churches to read his letters in public, as they read the writings of Moses and the prophets, and to obey them as from God. "If any man," says he, "think himself to be a prophet, or spiritual, let him acknowledge that the things which I write unto you are the commandments of the Lord. He, therefore, that despiseth, despiseth not man but God, who hath also given us his Spirit," 1 Cor. xiv. 37. 1 Thess. iv. 8.

V. Concerning the truth and purity of the apostolic testimony in behalf of their divine master, a reasonable inquirer may have all the satisfaction he

can ask. This is a subject of the greatest importance, and it demands the minutest consideration. Let us attend to its nature and force.

1. It is agreed by believers and unbelievers, that Jesus Christ was an extraordinary personage, a popular preacher, and crucified by the Jews.

2. His disciples attended him for three years in Judea, and Galilee, and Samaria ; and they have related the substance of his discourses, both in public and private, the miracles he performed in their presence, and the promises he made them previously to his crucifixion. They affirm that they saw him alive after his resurrection, and that they frequently conversed with him, sometimes in considerable numbers, for the space of forty days.— They relate the important conversations which took place at each of these interviews ; they more than once examined the wounds in his body ; and they beheld when he was taken up into heaven.— These were plain facts, in which there was not the least possibility of their being deceived.

3. The apostles were plain, artless men, who devoted themselves to the conversion of mankind from error to truth, from sin to holiness, and from the power of Satan to God. Therefore their whole life and character correspond with all we might expect of men employed in a divine mission.

4. They must have been either the best or worst of men, since they could not be deceived in evidence and facts so extensive and plain.

5. Had they been bad men, and impostors, they would, on some occasion or other, have discovered their forgery. Probably not less than a thousand hypocritical men must have been concerned in forging this single article, the resurrection of Jesus Christ ; and to suppose, that not one of them ever discovered it either through friendship, through a quarrel, through apostacy, through persecution or

the force of conscience in a dying hour, implies that they were men altogether dissimilar to those of the present age.

6. Had the disciples of Jesus been deceived in forming too high an opinion of their master; had he never realized the solemn promises he made them previously to his crucifixion, it is more than probable, that they would have retired to their houses, and not have persevered in a cause, which afforded neither honour, ease, nor wealth.

7. Their testimony exposed them to the rage and hatred of the priests, to the contempt of the learned, to the sword of the magistrates, and what is more intolerable, to the fury of the populace; yet they persevered, and cheerfully laid down their lives in confirmation of their doctrine.

8. The apostles and their brethren in the ministry were not the emisaries of either court or faction: they were not employed in making proselytes to any popular religion: they did not, like the disciples of Mahomet, propagate the faith by the point of the sword; they sometimes laboured with their hands, and frequently suffered both nakedness and hunger: they were never accused of seeking riches or repose; never, therefore, was human testimony more pure or free from suspicion.

9. They bore their testimony in the nation, and in the cities in which these things were done: they bore it at the time they were done, and in the face of those rulers who had crucified their Master, and who wanted neither power nor inclination to detect and punish them. This they could not have done, had they not been supported by truths and facts which became more distinguished by opposition. It was no more possible for them to persuade a large proportion of the Jewish nation to believe in a crucified person for salvation, had they not been divinely supported, than for a set of men to per-

suade us that Hugh Latimer, Richard Baxter, or John Wesley, performed a thousand miracles, arose from the dead, and ascended up into heaven in their presence, after having conversed with them for forty days in a cool and dispassionate manner.

10. They spake nothing but what Moses and the prophets had predicted; and therefore their testimony was in harmony with gradual revelation since the creation of the world.

11. They promised remission of sins, and the gift of the Holy Ghost, to all who sincerely believed in Christ; and if the multitude of those who did believe had not experienced those heavenly comforts, they would, most assuredly, have let Christianity sink as the visionary wonder of the age.

12. Jesus, while alive, would not suffer the demons to confess him, nor the wicked to see him after his resurrection; therefore, if any doubts were entertained, the apostles appealed to the miracles wrought in his name, and to the gift of tongues, which was a sign to the unbelievers. "He hath shed forth that which ye now see and hear."—"That heart must indeed be depraved, which asks clearer proof of the truth of Christianity, and of the inspiration of the holy apostles.

VII. The evidence on this subject, which ranks, in point of importance, next to that of the apostles, is the success of the gospel among the Jews.—There could not be less than ten or twenty thousand people converted in Jerusalem, and a proportionable number in all the other Jewish cities.—These had all imbibed the prejudices of their country in favour of a temporal Messiah to reign in Jerusalem; and these prejudices could not be removed without conviction. But they had all seen Christ, and most of them had honoured him as one of the ancient prophets revived from the dead. Many of them were the relatives or inti-

mate friends of those who had seen the Lord after his resurrection. They were connected with them in religious society; and some of them lived to the close of the first century. They had the fullest and fairest opportunity of conversing with them concerning the miracles, the resurrection, and ascension of Christ; and both their interest and their duty would induce them to examine these things to the bottom. They were themselves witnesses to the extraordinary endowments of the Holy Spirit, and of the miracles performed by the apostles.—The longer they lived, the more they were confirmed in the faith of Christ; and many of them forsook their country, and laid down their lives for the honour of his name.

Hence we have all the evidence which the subject can give. Human testimony can be no stronger, and reasonable men are ashamed to ask for more. We could not all live in that age, and reach our hand with Thomas to feel the pierced side of Christ. The Lord, after having indulged him in this extraordinary request, said, “Thomas, because thou hast seen thou hast believed; blessed is he who hath not seen and yet hath believed.” This implies, at least, that those who believe on the faithful testimony of the church shall be favoured with an inward assurance, which the incredulity of Thomas did not entitle him to claim. This kind of evidence was but temporary; it could not be continued, because it was not meet for the Messiah to remain in this poor sinful world. The truth of Christianity is demonstrated without it. The witnesses who saw him are competent in every view; and they have given us the clearest evidence that man can give to man.

Hence it follows, that men invested with so high a commission, and opening it by evidence so posi-

tive, so extensive, and divine, had a right to demand the assent of the nations. And after a full exposure of the truth and reasonableness of the Christian religion, it was their duty to add, "he that believeth shall be saved, and he that believeth not shall be damned. If any man love not the Lord Jesus, let him be anathema maranatha."

VIII. The next grand test of the inspiration of the holy scriptures is, the striking and incontrovertible accomplishment of a thousand types and predictions. These prophecies have respected events in every age of the world, and a sight of their accomplishment has been a continual support to the faith and patience of the saints. They have attested the truth and faithfulness of God, and have been encouraged to trust in his word.

The earth, according to the promise made to Noah, has not been destroyed a second time by a deluge of water, Gen. viii. 21. Imperial Babylon has been swept with a besom of destruction, Isa. xiii. 14. Proud Nineveh is a heap of ruins, Nah. i. ii. iii. Opulent Tyre has been demolished, and covered with the nets of fishermen, Ezek. xxvi. 4, 5. And ancient Egypt has been stripped of her glory, and made the basest of all the polished nations, Ezek. xxix.

Respecting the Jews, it was foretold that the sceptre should depart from Judea on the coming of the Messiah, Gen. xlix. 8, 9, 10. Many of their prophets, as we have already illustrated, foretold that they would harden their hearts against the gospel, and reject the Messiah. The destruction of Jerusalem was foretold by Daniel, ix. 26. by Christ, Matt. xxiv. and by St. Paul, Heb. x. 25. Moses said, that Israel should be scattered among all people, from one end of the earth, even unto the other, Deut. xxviii. 64. Hosea, that they should abide many days without a king, and without a prince, and with-

out a sacrifice, and without an image (or cherubim) and without an ephod, and without a teraphim : afterwards, that the children of Israel should return and seek the Lord their God, and David (the Messiah) their king, and should fear the Lord and his goodness in the latter days, Hos. iii. 4, 5. Our Lord also said, that the Jews should be led away captive to all nations, Luke xxi. 24. Respecting the gospel church, he said, that his disciples should increase as a grain of mustard-seed ; that the gates of hell should not prevail against them ; and that the gospel should be preached among all nations. The apostacy of the church, and the rise, marks, duration, and fall of the anti-christian empire, have all been fully and correctly pointed out by a succession of the sacred writers, Dan. vii. 25. Matt. xxiv. 15. 2 Thes. ii. 1 Tim. iv. 1, 2, 3. Rev. xiii. 11.

What an astonishing group of events is here wrapped up in the scroll of prophecy ! Men, cities and nations pointed out by names, as the objects of divine compassion or vengeance, and the circumstances detailed many ages before, with a precision that equals the most correct history. These occurrences are infinitely too numerous and extensive to have been conjectured by human foresight. Providence is so profound in wisdom, and extensive in economy, as to baffle all speculation of this nature. Surely, then, the sacred writers could not have known them but by the inspiration of Him before whom futurity is without a covering, who calls the things that are not as though they were, and doeth whatsoever he will in the armies of heaven, and among the nations of men. Besides, the evidence we receive from prophecy is of a nature, that increases in proportion as providence accomplishes the prediction. It is, therefore, much stronger to us than to the ancient Christians. We

dwell as on a high mountain, which commands a prospect of the fulfilment of God's faithful promises, and which assures us, that all the remaining promises respecting our salvation, and the latter day's glory of the church, shall be accomplished with an equal fidelity.

It should be here observed, that the arguments arising from prophecy in favour of Christianity, appear to much greater advantage to those who have leisure and learning to examine the antiquity of the scriptures, the distinguished manner in which they have been preserved, and to compare the accomplishment of these predictions with historic facts, than they can appear to young people, whose views are more confined. This being a subject of great importance, the following arguments on the authenticity of the Old and New Testament, should be well considered, and committed to memory.

IX. The Hebrew copy of the Jewish scriptures, now in use, was unquestionably extant in Ezra's time; and without any alterations except the errata of transcribers. And those of the learned Rabbins, who have endeavoured to restore the readings by collating manuscripts from different synagogues, affirmed that they found no reading which affected either the doctrine or authenticity of any one book. And it was as much impossible for Ezra to alter the Jewish scriptures, as for any man to alter ours, because the Jews were dispersed to many countries besides Babylon. This is farther proved from the Targums or translations which were begun in his time, from the testimony of all the sects among the Jews, and from the Samaritan copy; for this nation had the sacred writings, and they rivalled the Jews in every religious concern. We are further informed by Josephus, that the five books of Moses were translated into the Greek language, under the patronage of Ptolomy Soter, King of Egypt.

Some say that the whole of the Jewish scriptures were then translated by seventy-two Jews. Be that as it may, the sacred writings were unquestionably extant in the Greek tongue, in the reign of Antiochus Epiphanes, which was above one hundred and eighty years before the death of Christ. This precludes all possibility of the Christians having either forged or altered the prophecies, to establish the credit of their religion.

I hope it will equally appear, that the books of the New Testament are genuine, and written by the persons whose names they bear. This subject has been ably discussed by Dr. Nathaniel Lardner, Dr. George Benson, Dr. Philip Doddridge, and many other excellent defenders of the Christian faith, to whom I am indebted for most of the following observations.

1. The books of the New Testament appear to be genuine, because they contain nothing unsuitable to the age in which they are said to have been written; and the writers discover a knowledge of their own times superior to what is found in later authors.

2. The volume of the New Testament consists of histories and letters, which are ascribed to eight several authors; and from the diversity of style and composition, it evidently appears, that not less than eight persons were concerned in writing this book. There are considerable variations in the relation of some facts, and a few of such apparent contradictions, as would not have occurred, had this volume been written by one man, or by eight men in concert. Here are recited, the titles and offices of great men, and the characters of the rich and the poor are frequently delineated. Here is a history of occurrences in various nations and cities, and allusions to a variety of customs and opinions. Every one must be aware how difficult it is for a

man, however learned, to write a book in the character of authors of an earlier age, and not betray himself in some name, custom, or occurrence, or by some expression not then in use. It must, therefore, be next to an impossibility for any class of men to write so large and extensive a volume as the New Testament, and keep themselves perfectly free from these mistakes.

3. It is further evident, that the Christian scriptures are authentic, because many of the facts related by the evangelists, are related also by pagan authors. The taxing of the empire by Augustus Cæsar is mentioned by Tacitus, Dion, and Suetonius. The great light or star, which directed the wise men to Christ, is mentioned by Chalcidius. The slaughter of the infants at Bethlehem, by Herod is mentioned by Macrobius. That our Saviour foretold many things which were accomplished, is attested by Phlegon, in his annals, as the learned Origen assures us. The darkness which happened at his death, is also attested by the same author. The great number of Christians in all the provinces, and the rites and usages of the primitive church, are confirmed by Pliny. Many other testimonies of this nature, might, doubtless, have been adduced, had not many of the pagan authors of the first century been entirely lost. But the Christians being for a long time regarded as a Jewish sect, we cannot expect much concerning them from the heathens.

4. The Christian scriptures are comprised in twenty-seven books, and twenty of these were received in all the churches without a doubt. But the epistle to the Hebrews, the epistle of St. James, the second epistle of St. Peter, the third epistle of St. John, the epistle of St. Jude, and the book of Revelation, were, for a time, doubted by some of the churches. However, on being found to be the

genuine productions of the apostles, they were received also into the code of sacred scriptures. If these seven books had been found, upon examination, spurious, there would have been sufficient evidence from the other twenty, to prove that Christ was the very prophet, whom the nations were commanded to obey. The reception of these books, after their authenticity had been investigated, is proof to us, that the primitive Christians would receive no writings as apostolic without examination, and sufficient evidence.

5. Had the writings of the New Testament been false, they might easily have been confuted; yet we do not find, that any person ever attempted to refute the facts related by the apostles. Had there ever existed any counter histories, we should certainly have heard of them by some of the early opposers of Christianity. But Celsus, Porphyry, Julian, the Jewish Talmud, and others, never so much as call in question, the authenticity of these books. Indeed, they have acknowledged many of the facts related by the evangelists, and even allowed that Jesus performed miracles!

6. In what year, and by what church or council the several writings of the New Testament were first collected, and published in their present form, we are not informed. But as the apostles wrote the substance of their ministry by revelation, and commanded their epistles to be read, we may presume, that the churches to whom they were addressed, would give them a speedy circulation. The Christian revelation being closed by the apocalypse of St. John, we may presume, that they were then first collected in Asia. That they were collected early, is evident from Justin Martyr, who wrote about the year 150. He quotes and refers to them as records publicly known; and all the fathers of the second century do the same.

7. The books of the New Testament were written in Greek, which was then the travelling language. They were dispersed over all the empire, and read by the enemies of Christianity; and they would surely have made an attack upon their authenticity, had there existed the smallest ground of suspicion, or had there been any defect of living witnesses to attest the genuine nature of these productions. The original copies of these sacred books, were for a long time preserved, which superseded cavils of this nature. "You," says Tertullian, "who are desirous to employ your leisure in the more useful affairs of your salvation, go and visit the apostolic churches, in which their own authentic letters, are carefully preserved, and publicly read."*

8. There are a few passages in these writings, which have not been quoted by Greek and Latin authors now extant; copies were taken without number; and translations were made into various languages; yet when these copies and translations were collected from various libraries in Europe, Asia, and Africa, and collated with the most minute and critical care, they were allowed by all capable judges, notwithstanding their various readings, to be defective in no point of Christian doctrine or morality.

9. We may also add, that the ancient Christians were soon divided into sects; and these, as well as the modern denominations of Christians, have generally appealed to these books, as the standard of their faith and worship, and as the grand charter of their religion. They have likewise kept a jealous eye upon one another, lest any party should make the smallest alteration in favour of their peculiar opinions. We here adore the wise and gracious providence of God, which has over-ruled the weakness of mankind, and has made it conducive to the

* *Lib. de Præscript.*

preservation of books, which contain the best doctrines, enforce the purest morals, and were evidently composed with the most benevolent designs.

10. It should especially be remarked, that if the occurrences related in these scriptures, had not been matters of fact, they would not have been credited by persons who lived near the time, and in the cities in which they are said to have been done. On the contrary, they would have been treated as the most notorious lies and legends. Suppose that a few books should now appear among us, relating a number of facts which occurred about sixty years ago, and a number more which occurred but twenty or thirty years ago : suppose further, that they should comfort and support societies of religious people, now suffering very severe persecution from the King and the magistrates, (and it is confessed by Pagan as well as Christian historians, that Nero then persecuted the Christians ;) would they not be treated as the most hypocritical forgeries which ever were published ? would great numbers of people in these very places, change their religion, and suffer persecution, on the credit of books recording public facts which had never been heard of ? we may rather ask, would any sober-minded or extravagant description of men ever conceive a design so shameful and absurd ?

We may therefore reasonably conclude, that the gospels and epistles were really written before the destruction of Jerusalem, and consequently, that they were written by divine inspiration. Now, if all this variety of evidence, which is sometimes presumptive and reasonable, and sometimes clear, positive, and strong, do not prove the divine mission of our Lord and Saviour, and the truth of our religion, then nothing is capable of demonstration. If any man say after this, that Christianity is founded on "uncertain hear-say," and destitute of evidence, let him

bring forward ancient and authentic histories which contradict those facts. If this neither has, nor can be done, in what light can sceptical writings be viewed, but as inimical to truth and righteousness.

X. We shall close this section by a few testimonies from the primitive fathers, concerning the inspiration of the holy scriptures. It is highly proper to pay a due regard to their sentiments on this subject, because as some of them lived in, and all of them near the age in which they were written, they were the best qualified to appreciate their excellence and merit.

1. Clemens Romanus says, "that the apostles preached the gospel, being filled with the Holy Ghost; that the scriptures are the genuine word of the Spirit; and that St. Paul wrote to the Corinthians, things which were true, by the aid of the Spirit."

2. Polycarp tells the Philippians, "that no man could attain to the wisdom by which Paul had written their epistle."

3. Justin Martyr says, "that the gospels were written by men full of the Holy Ghost; and that the sacred writers had spoken by inspiration."

4. Irenæus says, "that all the apostles, as well as Paul, received the gospel by divine revelation; and that by the will of God, they delivered it to us, as the foundation and pillar of faith; that the scriptures were all dictated by the Spirit of God; and consequently, that it is wickedness to speak against them, and sacrilege to make in them the smallest alteration."

5. Clemens Alexandrinus says, "that those who have the scriptures are taught of God; that these writings are established by the authority of God; and that they are all divine books."

6. Origen is very expressive on this subject. He says, "that the scriptures are the effusions of the

Holy Spirit ; that their is not one iota in them but expresses a divine wisdom ; that there is nothing either in the law, the prophets, the gospels, or the epistles, which did not proceed from the fulness of the Spirit ; that we ought to acknowledge with all the faithful, that the scriptures are divinely inspired and received in all the churches as no other than the organs of God."

7. Tertullian testifies, " that the scriptures are the basis of faith ; that all Christians prove their doctrines out the Old and New Testament ; and that the majesty of God suggested what Paul has written."

8. An ancient writer, quoted by Eusebius, says, " that they who corrupt the scriptures, abolish the ancient standard of faith, and neglect the words of divine composition, through a fondness for the productions of human reason."

9. Theophilus Antiochenus says, " that the evangelists and apostles, wrote by the same Spirit which inspired the prophets."

O most merciful and gracious God, open our eyes, we beseech thee, to behold wonderful things out of thy law ! May we ever read thy sacred word as though thou wert present before our eyes, and speaking to us by the ministry of thy highly favoured and anointed servants ! May thy word inspire us with wisdom and comfort, and be sweeter to us than our necessary food. And while we are walking in this dark world, may it be as a lantern to our feet, and a lamp unto our path : for wherewith shall a young man cleanse his way, but by taking heed to thy commandments ? Assist us likewise, by the illumination of thy Holy Spirit, fully to comprehend, and ever to remember these abundant evidences of the truth of our most holy faith, that they may preserve us in the hour of temptation, and support us in the day of affliction. To this end, do thou manifest

thyself unto us, as thou dost not unto the world, that knowing on whom we have believed, we may be confident of thy ability to keep the soul we have committed to thy care, unto the appearing of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. Amen.

SECTION XII.

THE DOCTRINE OF THE SPIRIT LAID DOWN AS THE ULTIMATE TEST OF THE TRUTH AND POWER OF CHRISTIANITY.

Misisse vicariam vim Spiritus Sancti, qui credentes agat.

Christ hath sent in his place the virtue of the Holy Spirit, which actuates believers.

TERTUL. DE PRÆSCRIP.

WE have now taken a general view of the internal and external evidences of Christianity, and of the inspiration of the sacred writers. They are clear and conclusive, and, on many occasions, much stronger than could have been expected. But we may know and believe all these without being either reformed or converted. Besides, a perfect acquaintance with them requires abundance of leisure and learning. This the world at large cannot have, although they are equally concerned; we want, therefore, an universal evidence, which is equally plain to the learned and unlearned, and assures us of the godhead of Christ by revealing his divine power to the heart. This we have, blessed be God, in the gifts and comforts of the Holy Ghost.

“When the comforter is come,” says Jesus, “whom I will send unto you from the Father, even the Spirit of truth, which proceedeth from the Father, he shall testify of me. He shall guide you into all the truth. He shall teach you all things, and shall bring all things to your remembrance whatsoever I have said unto you. At that day ye shall know that I am in the Father, and ye in me,

and I in you." Saint Paul expresses himself to the same purpose: "no man can call Jesus Lord, but by the Holy Ghost. God hath sent forth the spirit of his Son into our hearts, crying Abba, Father. The Spirit itself beareth witness to our spirit that we are the children of God. Our gospel came not unto you in word only, but in power, in the Holy Ghost, and in much assurance." So says Saint John: "if we receive the witness of men, the witness of God is greater; for this is the witness of God which he hath testified of his Son. He that believeth on the Son of God hath the witness in himself. He that believeth not God hath made him a liar, because he believeth not the record that God gave of his Son. And this is the record that God hath given us eternal life, and this life is in his Son. He that hath the Son hath life, and he that hath not the Son hath not life."

In other places of scripture, the Holy Spirit is said to baptize us with fire—to shed abroad the love of God in our hearts—to be in us a well of water springing up to everlasting life—to be a Spirit of wisdom and revelation in the knowledge of God—a Spirit of grace and supplication in our devotion to strengthen us with might in the inner man, to abide with us for ever, and to seal us to the day of redemption. These are distinct and appropriate characters; and in these have the saints of all ages and nations received him. And though they may have differed a little in their mode of expression, yet the prominent features of the experience are precisely the same.

Having promises so numerous and explicit, so consolatory and inviting, what can be more reasonable than for the sincere inquirers after truth to come and ask of God the approving test? "Ask," says Jesus, "and ye shall receive. If ye, being

evil know how to give good things unto your children, how much more shall your Father which is in heaven give good things," or his Holy Spirit, "to them that ask him?" Could we desire a religion to be more open, a test better defined, or more efficacious in regenerating the human heart?

It must here be added, by way of caution, that the witness of the Spirit is not intended to supersede the internal and external evidences of the truth of Christianity; nor to distinguish in the scriptures, when various readings occur, which is pure, and which is corrupt: we may be saved without perfection in this kind of knowledge; but when the great truths of religion are laid before us, it is intended to apply them with divine power to the heart. Now, when we pray in the name of Christ, and receive a sense of pardon and comfort, it really proves that he is our propitiation, and that he is glorified with the Father. If otherwise, it proves that the Father bears witness to a lie, or deceives us in the tenderest concerns of our salvation. I am perfectly aware that God does daily comfort his children under many harmless errors and mistakes; but to suppose that he can comfort us while worshipping Jesus, a mere man, is to suppose that God can give his glory to a creature. This is impossible: the God of holiness cannot change—the God of truth cannot lie. He can no more smile on a gross act of idolatry than he can smile on a gross act of adultery; we, therefore, conclude with St. Paul, That our trust in Christ is well placed, because God hath given us the first fruits of the Spirit, which is the earnest of our inheritance until the redemption of the purchased possession. St. Peter proved, likewise, his ascension and godhead from the gifts of the Holy Ghost. "He hath shed forth that which ye now see and hear."

Every one who is desirous to investigate this grand test of the truth of Christianity, should be further apprized, that a *sincere* and *devout* mind is indispensibly required. If a man be not seeking virtue as well as truth, he is destitute of the grand qualification on which his success depends. No man can judge of doctrines which have holiness for their object, unless he be seeking purity of heart. So the scriptures every where inculcate; and he who sincerely seeks is sure to succeed. "The meek will he guide in judgment, the meek will he teach his way. They shall all," says Jesus, "be taught of God. Every man, therefore, that hath heard, and hath learned of the Father, cometh unto me. If any man will do his will he shall know of my doctrine whether it be of God, or whether I speak of myself," Psalm xxv. 8. John vii. 17.

An admired French writer expresses himself to the same effect. He exhorts the inquirer after sacred truth to imitate the Cyrils, the Basils, the Augustines, the Leons, exalted geniuses of antiquity, whose minds were elevated above the prejudices of their age." "Like them," says he, "commence your researches by seeking virtue, whose divine flame alone can point you out the path of truth, extinguish ignoble passions, recede from fatal connexions, become docile, simple, chaste, modest, and approach with humility the sanctuary, which is the repose of truth." A few lines after he adds, "God penetrates and charms my heart with the radiance of his glory! I see—I hear—I believe: my reason hearkens to the supreme Oracle, and to him alone." Whether Rousseau really believed what he here wrote, or whether the reading of Racine's beautiful poem *Sur la Religion*, had made a momentary impression on his heart, is not my business to determine: I am concerned only with the advice, which is perfectly agreeable to the scriptures, and

indispensably requisite for the successful investigation of sacred truth.

Should this sketch of the reasonableness of Christianity fall into the hands of those who are earnestly desirous to find the truth, and resolved to put religion to the test, by devoutly pleading its promises at the throne of grace, I should indeed count it one of the richest favours of heaven to render them some further aid in the affairs of their salvation.—With a view to this, I beg leave, as one that hath obtained mercy, to address them on the great importance of a change of heart, and a religious life.

My dear friends, and fellow-partakers of our Creator's bounty, open your bosom to conviction, and be not unwilling to know the worst of your moral depravity. Take an impartial and deliberate view of all those sins which lie heaviest on your conscience, and make you afraid to die.—Examine closely their atrocity, and all the aggravating circumstances which attended them; and in doing this, you will find them connected with a multitude of other sins, although of inferior magnitude. “Who can understand his errors, or count the number of his faults?”

You will then be led to consider the critical and awful situation to which you are reduced. The holy law has made manifest your sin, and the righteous God has pronounced you guilty. His mercy suspends you over hell, while his justice is importunate to cut the thread, and then you fall into your own place. In a situation so truly alarming, let not the vain pursuits of life soothe you into a fatal slumber. It is the extreme of folly to despise the justice of omnipotence, and of impiety to abuse his mercy.

Consider how the Lord Jesus hath wept, and bled, and died, to put away your sin; and how earnestly he intercedes for you in heaven! Consider his long-

suffering and kindness, the means he employs to effectuate your conversion, and all the riches of his grace, which are presented to you in the gospel.—He shows you his bleeding hands and feet, all his grief and pain for sin, and then the fountain that gushes from his side! Hear how he expostulates with the wicked; “O Ephraim. Ephraim, my son, how shall I give thee up! My relentings are kindled—how shall I seal thy destruction!” O what a look of love he casts on your wretched soul! And can you crucify him again by despising his mercy, and retaining your sins? Can the pleasures, the momentary pleasures of a sensual age, compensate for the loss of heaven, and for bringing down on your guilty heads the wrath of a vindictive God?

Perhaps Satan and your deceitful heart suggest, that you are young, that God is merciful, and that you may safely defer your repentance to a later period. Consider again, I entreat, the nature and tendency of such a thought, before consideration be too late. Is not this to ask long life, and all temporal happiness of a bounteous God, and then to offer him the decrepitude of old age? How long, I pray, would any master bear with a servant who should talk and act after this manner? I fear you are not aware of the fallacy of this temptation. If you are unwilling to part with your sins, and repent to day, you will be more unwilling to-morrow, for your heart will be hardened in proportion as you increase in guilt. If this warning be unattended with success, what hope then can be entertained that any future warning will have more effect? Hence, by rejecting grace to-day, you know not but you reject it for ever. It is preposterous in the extreme to trifle with sin and holiness, with death and eternity.

Admitting, for a moment, the hazardous supposition, that you should repent and find pardon in old age, even then your loss would be incalculable; for

you would have no time to grow in grace, and to glorify God by a life of active or of suffering piety. Those who have served the Lord from their youth, who have borne reproach and persecution, and made a great progress in knowledge and holiness, will assuredly be qualified to receive a larger degree of glory and happiness, than those who are plucked as brands from the burning. Personal rewards in glory shall be given in proportion to our holiness, our sufferings, and our works. He that had gained five talents was made lord over five cities, and he that had gained ten talents was made lord over ten cities. And shall men who boast of reason and knowledge, act a part so very irrational? Shall they barter the eternal glories and happiness of heaven, for the momentary pleasures of sin? Nor should it be overlooked, that if repentance be now deferred, you have merely a precarious hope of ever obtaining it. And if you should presume to ask mercy in your affliction, you leave Satan a just ground to suggest, that having rejected the Lord while young, he will now reject you when old; whereas, if you now repent and turn to God, you have a thousand explicit promises, that he will in no wise cast you out.

Say not as some, that the wicked are happy; nor indulge a wish to imitate their life. When you see them cheerful and gay in company, sprightly and facetious in their recreations, you see but a partial view of their character, when God and futurity are absent from the mind. Be assured, they are as far from real happiness as yourselves. See them when their wishes are frustrated, when their pride is mortified, and you hear them blaspheming one another with a fury like demons; or see them pursuing their lusts, to the utter ruin of unprotected innocence, and say, whether they can be happy who make others miserable? Look at their end, when

vice has superinduced disease, and rendered them incapable of pleasure. Their families conceal them in their chambers, lest the alarming situation of their minds should transpire, and lest any one should speak to them concerning religion. A wretch in this situation is abandoned by all his voluptuous companions ; or should a few have the hardness to see the termination of a sinful life, it is but to increase his wretchedness by false and delusive hopes. " Have a good heart," say they ; " keep up your spirits, you will soon recover." And when they are retired from his chamber, they say, " alas ! poor man, he is not long for this world !" If this man take a view of the gay and pleasurable scenes he once enjoyed, they do but increase his misery, for he cannot enjoy them now ; and if he look forward to futurity the very thought is insupportable. He sinks between these precipices, like a man in an earthquake, and the rocks falling on both sides, complete his destruction. From this inundation of vice and misery there is no retreat, but to the ark of Jesus Christ ; for all shall perish who are not encircled with his arms.

Be not discouraged, nor say, as many do, that you cannot resist the force of temptation, and refrain from sin, for that were to charge your folly upon your Maker. Honour and politeness do, on a thousand occasions, restrain men from sin, which proves that God hath not forsaken them, and that by watchfulness and prayer they might refrain on all occasions. That the human depravity might be no excuse for sin, the Lord Jesus has restored the freedom of the will, and exalted fallen man again by the grace of the new covenant, to a state of probation. His Spirit strives with man, and convinces him of sin. One, two, or five talents are delivered to all his servants ; and the gospel is sent to every creature. The grace of God, that bringeth salva-

tion to all men, hath appeared, teaching us that denying ungodliness and worldly desires, we should live soberly, righteously, and godly in this present world, looking for that blessed hope, and the glorious appearance of the great God and our Saviour Jesus Christ. If our nature incline us to sensuality, anger, and pride, the motions of his grace incline us to meekness, purity, and love. If the example of bad men prompts us to vice, the example of good men prompts us to virtue. If evil angels tempt and seduce us to sin, good angels are ever ready to warn us, and retrieve us from it. Were it not in consideration of this moral liberty, it would be absurd to call the blind to see, the deaf to hear, and the dead to awake. And, that this grace is given in sufficient proportion for the restoration of holiness, is manifest from universal experience. Jews, Heathens, and Christians, have served God in the most perilous times and profligate courts: hence, if we do perish, our ruin is not to be attributed to any imaginary decrees, to the fall of Adam, or the force of temptation; it is because we reject the council of God against ourselves. Free-will, through grace, and universal redemption, are taught by common consent among the fathers. They know nothing of fate and necessity, or of absolute predestination, doctrines which chill the soul of active virtue, and are shameful libels on the moral and gracious economy of providence.

The human nature being so far ennobled, as to be raised again to a state of probation, and infinity of happiness or misery have their centre in every man's bosom; and he is now called upon to make his choice, whether he will have Christ and his cross here, and glory hereafter; or whether he will remain the dupe of sin and delusive happiness, till he falls under the weight of folly and vice, and under the frowns of Almighty God. To hesitate is

a crime, and finally to reject the gospel is the consummation of guilt. If these truths have met your thoughts, and moved your heart ; if they have revived or added to your former good impressions, beware of losing them as heretofore.

Let the tear flow ; let the heart relieve itself in the sweetness of contrition, and by earnest supplication to God. Retire to your closet, and there, on your bended knees, enter into covenant with your Maker. Yes, by a noble effort of the soul, which angels shall admire, and heaven applaud, resolve at once to disengage yourself from all the ensnarements of vice, and to dedicate all your future life to God, according to the doctrine and example of his Son Jesus Christ.

Some who are disposed to a holy life suffer much perplexity for want of proper ideas concerning the nature and necessity of the *new birth*, which is the gate of life, and the only way to the kingdom. Many, in reading the scriptures, in a manner overlook it ; and propose, by abstaining from sin, and living righteously, to obtain the divine favour. 'This is depending on our own good endeavours for justification ; or at least, it is associating them with the merits of Christ, which is highly improper. All that a sinner can do, is to use the grace he has received of the Lord ; for who can bring a clean thing out of an unclean ! or how can the defiled prepare themselves for the bosom of the Just and Holy One ? We must therefore receive the Holy Spirit, to be in us a principle of regeneration, that we may be made partakers of the divine nature, and renewed after the image of Christ in righteousness and true holiness — By grace we are saved through faith ; and that not of ourselves, it is of God : not of works, lest any man should boast. Thus, except a man be born of the Spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God.

Come, then, with a humiliating sense of your sinfulness and misery, and of a total inability to help

yourself. Take a view of the Lord Jesus Christ as willing and able to save you to the uttermost, and cast your soul on his merits in some such words as these : for “ the point of importance is, the inward disposition of the mind ; where the dependence for pardon and holiness is really placed ; not what the language is in which men express themselves.”*

[An act of faith, or confidential prayer.]

O most gracious, adorable, and glorious Redeemer ! thy poor fallen creature, unable to hold out any longer against thy truth and grace, presumes to come and prostrate at thy door ! Have compassion upon me according to the bowels of thy mercy, and abundant loving kindness. I have sinned against heaven, and in thy sight ! sinned times without number against thy light and love, and have no refuge but thine open arms. If thou cast me off, I am lost and undone for ever ! If thou hide thy face, darkness is my dwelling, and anguish my abode. But, O most compassionate High Priest ! who art touched with the feeling of all my infirmities, remember, I beseech thee, all thy grief and pain, and anguish and death for me ; and all thy train of mercies towards a sinner long sought, and long pursued. Emboldened by these, I come and fall at thy feet. Look on thine agony, and give me peace ; on thy sorrows, and wipe away my tears ; on thy wounds, and heal my broken heart. Let not Satan exult in taking the prey from the hand of the mighty ; nor let the corruption of my nature be stronger than the power of thy grace. O Lord, in defiance of my unbelief, I acknowledge thy willingness to save a sinful worm. The shedding of thy blood demonstrates thy willingness to wash away my sins ; the laying down of thy life, convinces me how willing thou art I should live ; and the extending of thy arms, proves thy readiness

* Wilberforce's Practical View, &c.

to receive me to the bosom of thy everlasting love. Thy promises and invitations are for the weary and heavy laden, for the poor and wretched, for the halt and the blind. They all identify my state, and ensure to me the blessing. O most compassionate High Priest! I here come in thine own appointed way: I come guilty to receive a pardon; miserable, to obtain mercy; and wretched, to be made happy. I come a poor captive to be liberated; helpless and empty, to be filled with thy power and grace; and loaded with sin, to embrace thy justifying favour. Here I fall at thy feet, and would prostrate with greater humility; I would grieve with a deeper compunction; but let the cloud of thy merits cover mine infirmities, and the delays of justice yield to the entreaties of thy mercy. Hide thy face from my sins, and blot out all my transgressions; and for the glory of thy great name, "let it be unto me according to thy word."

While the secrets of your heart are disclosed in this manner, at the throne of grace, it will not—it cannot be long before your soul is brought into liberty. The Father of mercies cannot behold your distress from the highest heavens, and forget his compassion. The Saviour cannot see your sorrows, and hear your groans, and forget his agony in the garden, and all his sufferings on the cross. He suspends the blessing only till your heart is prepared to receive it: and whenever that is the case, the love of God shall be shed abroad in your heart by the Holy Ghost. Then you are born of God, and made a partaker of that holiness, without which no man shall see the Lord.

But should the blessing be delayed, let not your hopes fail. Wait for it in the frame already described; wait with earnest expectation, and with a grateful patience, that our state is not worse; and as the sun breaks forth on a dark and cloudy day,

so will the Lord surprise you with a visit of his love, and lift upon you the light of his countenance. Or should you be weak in faith, and favoured only with the drawings of the Spirit, and with intervals of lucid hope ; or at most, with no more than the momentary glows of God's love ; be not dispirited, for you may yet attain to the measure of the fulness of Christ. You are not to hide the one talent because you have not five. The greatest saints had once a weak beginning. Let the closet share in the duties of the day ; search the scriptures ; read the experience of eminent Christians ; exercise yourself in hymns and spiritual songs, and your faith and love will abundantly increase.

This peculiar sensation of the divine favour being a prominent feature in Christian experience, and an indispensable qualification for heaven, it must not be passed over without a proper train of reflections. It is wholly owing to men's ignorance of this subject, that the state of the nominal and genuine Christian are so frequently confounded.

In discussing the doctrine of the Spirit, I am aware of treading the ground, and moving in a sphere, where many think that nothing but fanaticism occurs. They contend for a rational religion, and seem to dread enthusiasm as the last of evils. But, with me, it is a decided point, that we cannot be made partakers of the divine nature without a divine influence : and the Holy Spirit acting on our mind and senses, we may be as conscious of the divine as of human operations. For example, *Des Cartes* began his system of philosophy with this axiom ; *Ego cogo, ergo sum*. I think, therefore I am. Conscious of thought, he was conscious of existence. Just so we know that we have an understanding by our understanding : and we know that there is a sun by the light of the sun. Just so, St. Paul knew the things of God by the spirit of

God, 1 Cor. ii. 12. The philosopher and the apostle lay down similar propositions, and draw similar conclusions. The force of argument is equally clear in both; for the works of grace never recede from the profoundest scrutiny of the human mind. Let us trace its characteristics.

1. This comfort is not a mere warmth of the passions and affections, or a momentary transport of natural joy. If so, it would ebb and flow with the tide of our pleasing and painful occurrences; and it is so far from doing this, that God often visits us with a manifestation of his love when the mind is not particularly engaged with any object. This is a good argument for concluding, that this comfort is no reflex act, but altogether divine. So it is considered by a poet, whom the irreligious world have not presumed to charge with enthusiasm.

“What nothing earthly gives or can destroy,
The soul’s calm sun-shine, and the heart-felt joy.”

POPE’S ETHIC EPISTLES.

2. It is preceded by a suitable degree of repentance and humiliation for sin, and by faith in our Lord Jesus Christ. To this there is no exception; the soul must renounce its sin, and implore forgiveness, before it can possibly receive this approving smile from God, Acts ii. 38, 39. xix. 6. Fasting and prayer, humility and self-denial, happily tend to prepare the heart for grace; but an act of faith is the most acceptable sacrifice we can present to God.

3. When this comfort is given in a clear and powerful manner, it instantly changes our sorrow into joy, and our sighs and complaints into songs of salvation. It reverses all our fears and discouragements, occasioned by the evils which we suffer. “Though our outward man perish, our inward man

is renewed day by day. When my heart and my flesh faileth, God is the strength of my heart and my portion forever."

4. It has a powerful effect in sanctifying the heart, and all its affections. The soul is filled with divine simplicity and holy love. It hates all sin, and cannot bear a thought which is contrary to the will of God. It delights in loving and serving him with all its powers, and accounts no labours too severe, if sinners may be converted to him. The regenerate man is now in his right mind, he is clothed with humility, and seated at the feet of Christ.

5. It is given in various degrees. While the seeker is engaged in religious exercise, a gracious promise of a reviving hope, attended with this divine comfort for the moment, enkindles his heart. This we usually term the drawings of the Father's love. But when the heart is so replenished with the love God, that its sensations can scarcely be concealed, we term it the direct witness of the Spirit, that we are the children of God by faith in Christ Jesus, Rom. viii. 15, 16.

6. This divine comfort is mostly transient.—Heaven does not seem too profuse of its choicest favours. It is proper to remark this, that the young convert may not sink into despondency whenever it is withdrawn. The causes, however, he should diligently examine, that he may avoid them in future, and with humility entreat the Lord to restore him to the joy of his salvation. "In my prosperity I said, my mountain is strong, I shall never be moved. Thou didst hide thy face, and I was troubled. Lift thou upon me the light of thy countenance. Heaviness may endure for a night, but joy cometh in the morning."

7. This comfort is known to none but the regenerate, and it cannot be expressed but by analogy. Hence, it is frequently called fire, because it has a

cheering effect on the soul, in some sort similar to the effect of fire on the body, when we return from the cold. It refines our dross, and consumes our sin. It is called the earnest of our inheritance, and the first fruits of the Spirit, because as the earnest is really part of the price, and as the first fruits are really part of the harvest, so this comfort is a genuine foretaste of heaven. In the same manner are those scriptures to be understood, which speak of it by the analogy of wine and love.

Now, the natural man, however wise and learned, cannot extend his ideas beyond the letter of scripture; but here more is intended than language can convey. These inexpressible delights of divine comfort are carefully marked by the sacred writers. 'The word of God is sweeter than honey or the honey-comb: the peace of God passeth all understanding: the love of Christ passeth knowledge: the joy in the Holy Ghost is unspeakable and full of glory. If God has been pleased in this way, to manifest himself unto us as he does not unto the world, may he ever enable us to hold the mystery of faith in a pure conscience.

8. It increases in our hearts till it has consumed our sin, and restored us to the image of God. It frequently happens that the young convert really thinks his warfare is completely past, though but just begun. His heart may now, not unaptly, be compared to a garden, properly dressed and sown: it seems perfectly free from weeds, because they do not appear: but in a little time they spring up, and if not eradicated soon over-run the ground. So it is with the latent evils of the human heart, pride, fretfulness and unbelief. If these be not well subdued, and rooted up on their first appearance, they reduce the soul to a wilderness state. To this effect we are cautioned in the sacred scriptures.—
“Let not sin reign in your mortal bodies. If ye

live after the flesh, ye shall die; but if ye, through the Spirit, do mortify the deeds of the body, ye shall live. Let grace reign through righteousness, and be the power of God unto an endless life."

The life of God in the soul is inseparably connected with a progress in faith and holiness. We cannot remain at one stay in divine attainments. The Christian resembles a boat, which gains on the stream by rowing, but when the oars cease it is carried back by the flood. Fresh supplies of grace must be derived every moment from God, the source of all felicity. The backslider can no more satisfy his soul with the recollection of past experience, than cattle can drink at exhausted pools. The river of life must flow through the heart with a constant stream, and gladden the habitation of God. It is the end of divine predestination, or the order of God in the kingdom of grace, that we should be conformed to the image of his Son. "Leaving, therefore, the principles of the doctrine of Christ, let us go on to perfection."

There was no virtue which the apostles were more solicitous their children should acquire, than a maturity in Christian holiness. It was the ultimate object of all their addresses, and lay nearest to their heart in devotion. "For this cause," says Paul to the Ephesians, "I bow my knee unto the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ; that he would grant you, according to the riches of his glory to be strengthened with might by his Spirit in the inner man, that Christ may dwell in your hearts by faith, that ye being rooted and grounded in love, may be able to comprehend with all saints what is the breadth, and length, and depth, and height, and to know the love of Christ which passeth knowledge, that ye might be filled with all the fulness of God." When writing to the Thessalonians he prays for the same blessing: "and the very God of peace

sanctify you wholly : and I pray God, that your whole spirit, and soul, and body, be preserved blameless unto the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ. Faithful is he that hath called you, who also will do it.

9. This farther work of grace is frequently spoken of as already attained by many of the established believers. Our old man is crucified with Christ. Ye are dead, and your life is hid with Christ in God. I live not, but Christ liveth in me. The law of the Spirit of life, which is in Christ Jesus, hath made me free from the law of sin and death. We have known and believed the love that God hath unto us. God is love, and he that dwelleth in love dwelleth in God, and God in him. Herein is our love made perfect, that we may have boldness in the day of judgment, because as he is, so are we in this world. In this last and remarkable passage, St. John seems to consider divine love as a fire which converts every thing into its own substance. This cannot imply less than the total destruction of pride, anger, selfishness, and fear. "There is no fear in love : perfect love casteth out fear : he that feareth is not made perfect in love." If the roots of sin still remain alive in the believer, he cannot be said to be dead with Christ, and crucified to the world.

10. We may further observe, that this advanced state of Christian holiness, is attained by faith.—Our hearts are purified by conversing with divine objects. "All we, beholding, as in a glass, the glory of the Lord, are changed into the same image from glory to glory, even as by the Spirit of the Lord." By this faith Caleb shamed and confounded the unbelievers "before Moses, and said, let us go up at once and possess it, for we are well able to overcome it." Our trials have also a fine effect in purifying the heart : they irritate our latent depravity, and are admirably calculated to effectuate

its entire destruction. St. Peter assures the suffering saints, that after a while the Lord would make them perfect, settle, strengthen, and establish them, 1 Pet. v. 10.

11. It should be likewise observed, that the word *perfect*, which is so frequently used to express this farther work of grace, is to be understood in a limited sense : it is a perfection in the Christian tempers and virtues which admits of growth and increase. Hence, the virtues of holy men are set before us, that we may “ be followers of them who through faith and patience inherit the promises.” Moses, most assuredly, was saved from selfishness, and perfected in the love of God, when he esteemed the reproach of Christ greater riches than the treasures of Egypt. Job was saved from murmuring and perfected in patience, when he said, on the loss of his substance, and the death of his children, “ the Lord gave, and the Lord hath taken away, blessed be the name of the Lord.” Stephen was saved also from anger and revenge, and perfected in love, when he prayed for his murderers in these pathetic words, “ Lord Jesus, lay not this sin to their charge.”

12. It should be remarked, to the same effect, that a growing perfection in holiness is compatible with all the weaknesses and infirmities common to human nature. We cannot be saved in this life from error and mistake ; nor can we either love or serve the Lord in the manner which is due to his divine Majesty : and yet, where sincerity prevails in the heart, he will no more condemn us for these moral defects, than for our natural infirmities. He has established his new covenant with man, not in a state of perfection but of imperfection.—Hence all that we do has need of the merit of Christ to render it acceptable to God. The Lord himself is our righteousness and our glory. These

infirmities should especially be kept in view in forming our opinion of the characters and religious attainments of believers. Some are deliberate and dull, others cheerful and gay: some are calm and sedate, others are nervous and irritable. This variety in the tempers and character of men is the music of society; and it is not the design of grace to destroy what is natural, but what is sinful.

Let us therefore keep in view the exceeding great and precious promises which are given us in Christ Jesus, that by these we may be made partakers of the divine nature. Let us cleanse ourselves from all filthiness of the flesh and spirit, perfecting holiness in the fear of God. Let us not live below our privileges, but let our graces mellow into maturity, that we may eat the full ripe fruit of the gospel dispensation, and be presented faultless before the presence of his glory with exceeding joy.

THE END.

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